Ranger Rick's nature magazine

December, 1967

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

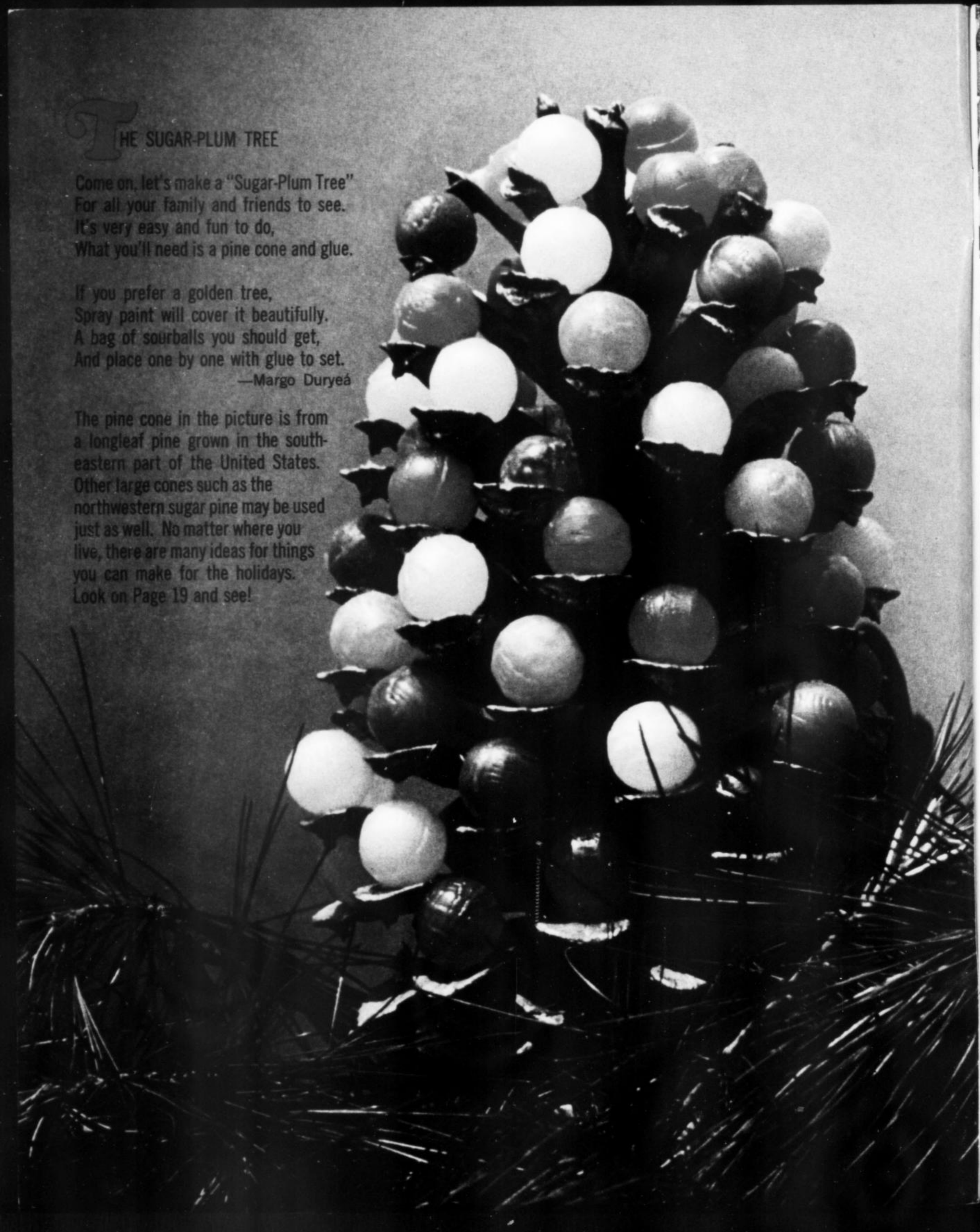
THE SUGAR-PLUM TREE

Come on, let's make a "Sugar-Plum Tree"
For all your family and friends to see.
It's very easy and fun to do,
What you'll need is a pine cone and glue.

If you prefer a golden tree,
Spray paint will cover it beautifully.
A bag of sourballs you should get,
And place one by one with glue to set.

—Margo Duryeá

The pine cone in the picture is from a longleaf pine grown in the southeastern part of the United States. Other large cones such as the northwestern sugar pine may be used just as well. No matter where you live, there are many ideas for things you can make for the holidays. Look on Page 19 and see!



This book belongs to

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OBJECTIVES: To give boys and girls a year-round program of activities, adventure and knowledge which will help them appreciate and enjoy nature. To help them know and respect all things that grow and creatures that move, that all may desire to conserve and wisely use the vital natural resources of the world.

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Cover credits: Front—Blue jays and wreath-feeder by Russ Kinne; Inside front—Sugar-plum tree by Sister Geannine Lapiere; Idea created by Anne Johnson; Back—Caribou by Les Blacklock.

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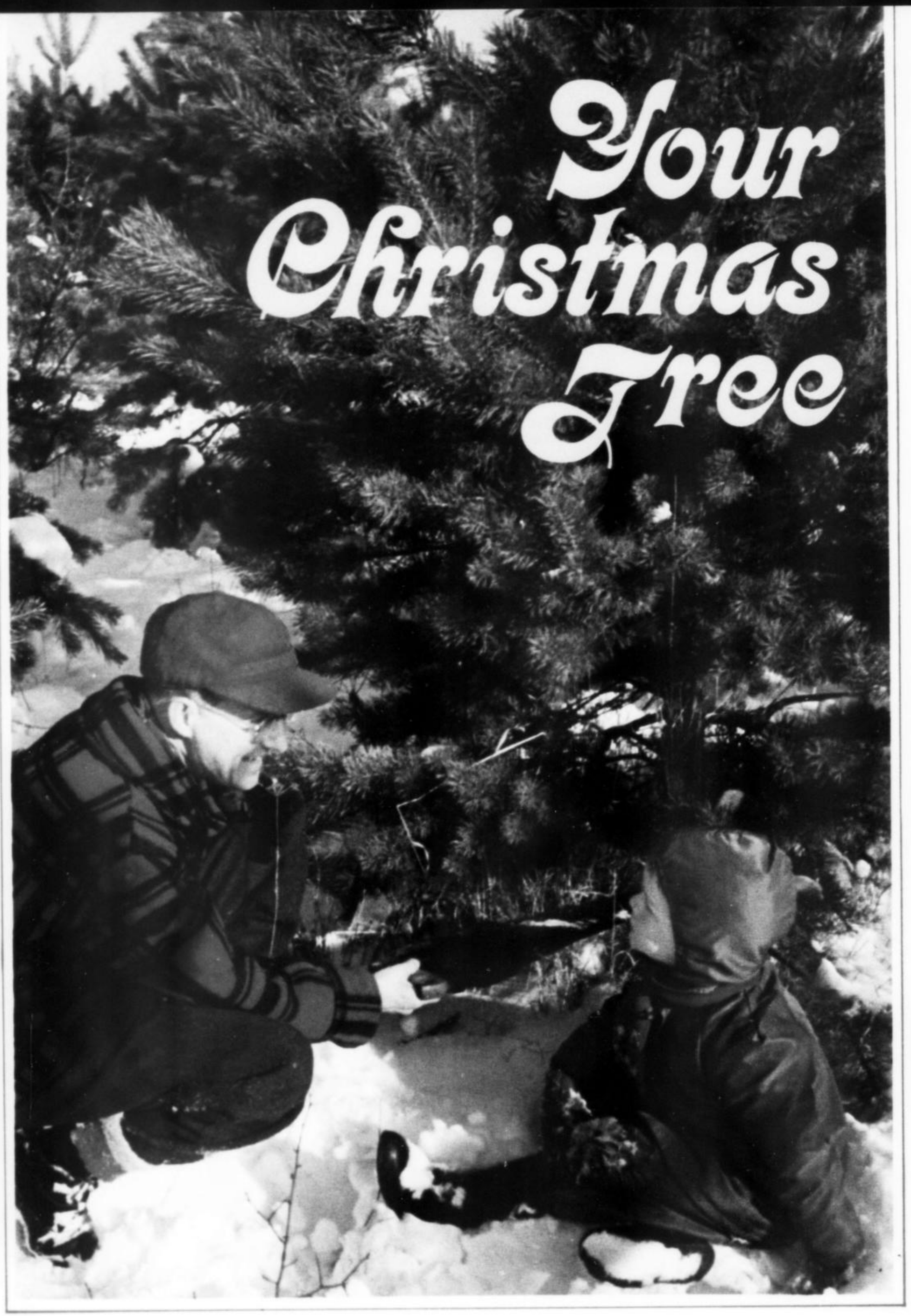
Your
Christmas
Tree

Story and photos by Richard B. Fischer
Professor of Nature and Conservation Education, Cornell University

Nature comes into our homes many times during the year: pussy willows in spring, daisies in summer, brightly colored leaves in autumn, and an evergreen tree at Christmastime.

But why an evergreen? This custom goes back thousands of years into pre-Christian history. It was believed that the evergreen trees stood for eternal life.

Today, we still celebrate with evergreens. They just naturally go with Christmas—like snow and reindeer—don't they? We had a Scotch pine tree last year, but my children Peg, Dick and Jonathan want a spruce this Christmas.

Do you know how to identify the different Christmas trees? It's easy. Look at the needles on your tree. If they are gathered into little bundles or groups of two, three or five as in picture 1, you have a pine. Does each needle grow on the branch by itself as in picture 2? Then your tree is a fir or a spruce and you'll have to look more closely at these. Do you see two white lines on the underside of each needle? If so, the tree is a fir as in picture 3. If not, then you have a spruce. Spruce needles are sharply pointed. Look where needles have fallen off. If the branch is sort of prickly, you have a spruce, but if there are only little whitish dots, it's a fir.

What? Your tree is not any of these? Then I'll bet it has very tiny needles, so small they look almost like fish scales. If it looks like picture 4, you have a juniper! It may have little blue-green cones that look more like berries. If your tree is a *red*

Please turn the page

1

2

3

4

cedar species of juniper, notice the pretty red and white wood where it was cut.

Christmas trees have stories, but you have to know how to read them. Pine stories are easiest to read. First, notice how each group of laterals or side branches comes out from the trunk at the same level. (See picture 5.) Each set of laterals along with the section of trunk above each one count as one year's growth.

Count the number of laterals on your tree. Then add another year for the section of trunk *below* the bottom set of laterals and you will will know about how old your tree is. This is not the exact age because several years are left behind on the stump when the tree is cut. But we can say your tree is older than it looks!

When it is time to take down your Christmas tree, examine the cut end. See the rings? Each ring represents a year's growth. If the tree has not been clipped to improve its shape, or injured in some way, you may find as many annual rings as there are sections of trunk.

5

What other stories can we read in the rings? If the rings are wide near the center of the stem and then get narrower and narrower as you read toward the bark, your tree might have grown in a Christmas tree plantation. As the trees around it grew, they crowded your tree so it grew less each year. Or it might mean there was not enough rain, or maybe the soil was losing its fertility. If the rings get wider near the bark, that could mean growing conditions improved. Is the center of each ring in the middle of the trunk? No? Then there were probably other trees crowding yours on the side where the rings are closer to each other.

There are fun things to do with your tree after Christmas. We poke ours into a hole in the ground to shelter the winter birds. On the branches we hang strings of popcorn and cranberries, pine cones dipped in melted suet, and little mesh onion bags containing pieces of suet. Soon the chickadees and nuthatches come to *their* Christmas tree! One year, after the winter birds had gone back to the woods, a chipping sparrow built her nest in the tree.

Or, you might arrange your tree and two others from neighbors into a group so that their inner branches touch. Sparrows, juncoes and others will use them for sleeping, for protection and as shelters from winter storms.

Is your Christmas tree a fir? If so, you have still another treat in store. Crush some needles and smell them. It reminds me of cool forests where birds sing and fish splash in clear streams. Try this: Put some fir needles in a small cloth bag and hang it in your closet for months of wonderful fragrance.

Your Christmas tree can bring nature to your home all year round. *The End*

CARIBOU

THE NORTH AMERICAN REINDEER

by Leonard Lee Rue, III

Santa Claus couldn't have chosen a better team for his sleigh than the reindeer. Of course he had to use his own magic to make them trot on air, but otherwise, reindeer are perfect for a journey that starts at the North Pole.

The first reindeer probably developed in Lapland. The first men who lived there herded and tamed them. Even today in Lapland and parts of Siberia, reindeer herds provide meat, milk and hides. They are also used to pull heavy sleds.

The map on Page 10 shows how reindeer came to North America many thousands of years ago. There they grew broader antlers than did their Lapland relatives and they developed other slight differences. We even call them by a different name—caribou (KAR-uh-boo). This is an Indian word meaning "shoveler." It comes from the animal's habit of pawing the snow to find its main food: lichens and mosses. The caribou's "shovel" feet are a big help in wet, boggy areas like the Arctic tundra in summertime. The hooves spread apart, making the foot wider than it is long. The dew-claws—the two toes at the back of each foot—reach the ground and give extra support. In summer the hoof has a soft, spongy pad at its center. This dries

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Drawing by Jack Weaver

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up in winter and is covered with short hair which provides extra warmth. The outer edge of the hoof becomes hard which helps keep the animal from slipping on icy ground.

The female caribou is the only female member of the deer family with antlers. But the antlers are smaller and more slender than those of the male. His antlers are his crowning glory, sometimes they grow as long as five feet.

Like most of the deer family, caribou travel in herds for safety. They walk—marching to a strange, clicking beat. This is caused by their tendons rubbing tightly against their heelbones. When alarmed, caribou can trot at better than thirty miles an hour. They carry their antler-crowned heads proudly and each leg is picked up high as though it had springs. They almost seem to be trotting on air—like Santa's reindeer.

The caribou's handsome, white-trimmed, gray-brown winter coat is made of hollow, air-filled hairs. This makes a wonderfully warm covering. Even the caribou's nose is covered with hair in winter. The hair also acts as a built-in life jacket and keeps the caribou floating high on the water when crossing rivers. Their "shovel" feet make excellent paddles for swimming.

The caribou's main predator is the wolf. But a healthy wolf cannot catch a healthy caribou. Wolves chase the herd until some caribou drop out. These are the old, the sick and the weakest of the young. Thus wolves remove weakness and disease before they can spread within the herd.

Barren ground caribou are famous for their long spring and autumn migrations. In the winter, they live in the shelter of the northern Canadian forests. Then during April and May, herds of cows followed by their yearlings gather at the treeline. They are joined by other herds until thousands move northward to a thunder of clicking tendons. The bulls follow some weeks later. Even though caribou travel in herds, the bulls keep separate from the cows, calves and yearlings during most of the year.

Photo courtesy of Norwegian Embassy Information Service

Norwegian Lapps go visiting in reindeer sleds.

The caribou look shaggy as they shed their winter coats. Their socks and neck-capes are covered with mud. They are attacked by hordes of flies and mosquitoes. But the long hard journey is worthwhile, for the frozen plains of the Arctic tundra come to life in the summer. The top few inches of earth have thawed. During the long days and nights when the sun never sets, vegetation grows green and lush. Caribou find lichens, mosses, dwarf willow and birch trees and small berry bushes on which to browse.

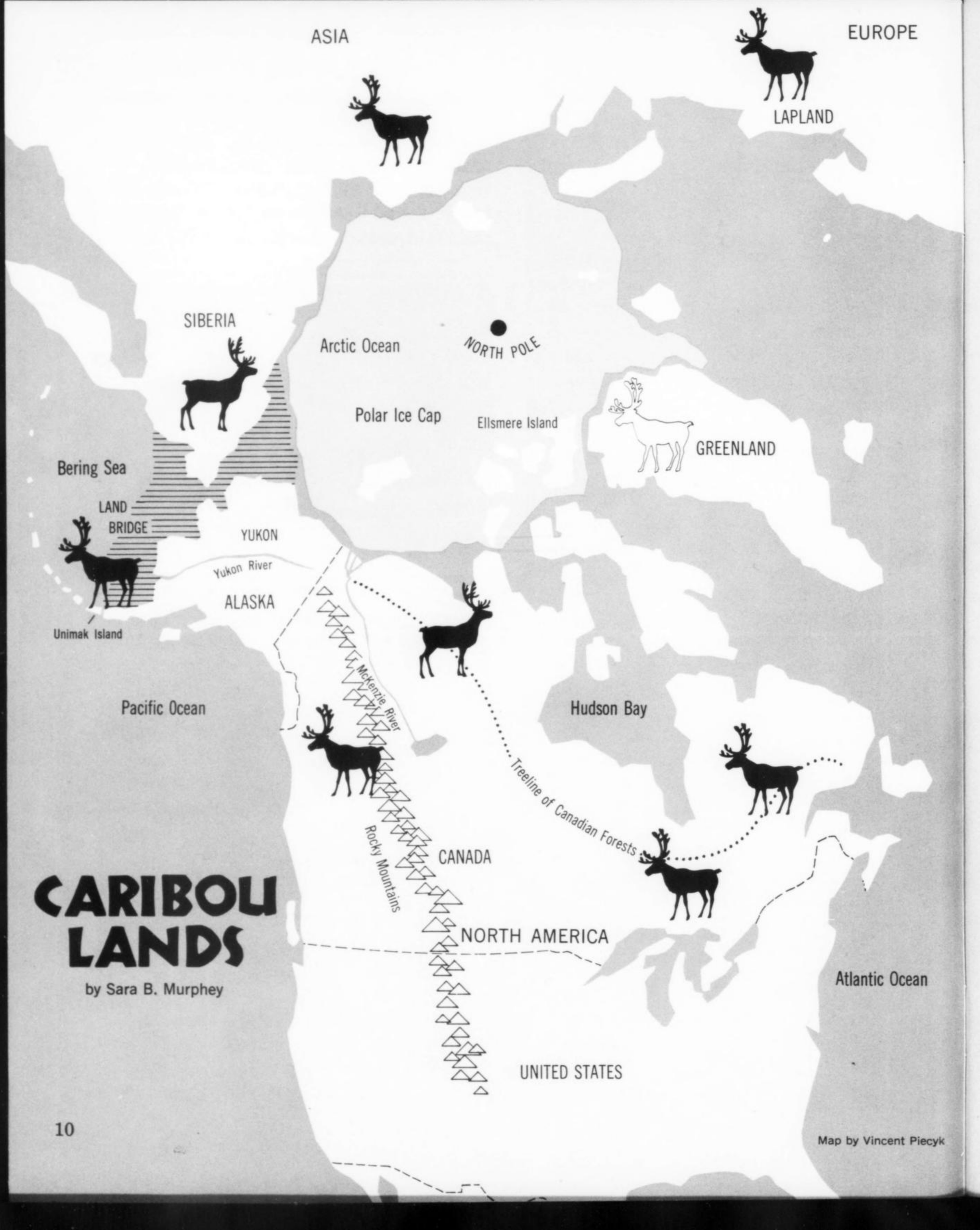
In late May and early June the calves are born. They weigh between ten and twelve pounds. Within a few hours they are able to follow their mothers and after three days they can run faster than a man. They are nursed until the end of summer.

Please turn the page

Drawing by Rudolf Freund

CARIBOU LANDS

by Sara B. Murphey



Map by Vincent Piecyk

The first reindeer lived in a part of northern Europe called Lapland where Norway, Sweden, Finland and a bit of Russia border the Arctic Ocean. Later they wandered east across Siberia in northern Asia.

Scientists believe reindeer came to North America during one of the glacial periods of earth's long Ice Age. Glaciers trapped so much seawater that the level of the ocean went down. A land bridge (see gray area) formed in the Bering Sea between Siberia and Alaska. Reindeer and other animals were able to cross to the North American continent.

The several races of North American caribou are closely related to the reindeer of Europe and Asia.

Grant's caribou live only on the Alaskan peninsula and Unimak Island.

Peary's caribou live in northern Greenland, on Ellsmere and neighboring Arctic islands. They, like the wolves which prey upon them, are white just like their icy homeland.

Woodland caribou range through the evergreen forests of northern Canada from Newfoundland and Nova Scotia to the Rocky Mountains.

Mountain caribou, closely related to the woodland race, live in the Rockies. The only caribou that wander south of the Canadian border into northern Idaho and Washington.

Barren Ground caribou are famous for their long migrations in spring and fall. Some range from the forests of Canada's Yukon to the tundra lands of northern Alaska. Others range across northern Canada from the Mackenzie River to the Hudson Bay. They are larger and lighter in color than the woodland caribou, and their color blends with the treeless plains where they spend part of each year.

Scientists believe that the North American caribou is of the same species as the European reindeer, and they think that the Eskimos and American Indians are related to people who also crossed from Asia to North America on an Ice Age land bridge.

Just as the Plains Indians depended on the buffalo, the Eskimos and Indians of Alaska and northern Canada based their way of life on the caribou. They did not tame caribou because they were hunters rather than herders. Caribou meat was an important food for them. Hides furnished clothing and tent coverings. Even the sinews were used for thread and the bones were carved into needles, knives and spear points.

(Story continued from page 9)

By then they are also eating vegetation and weigh nearly fifty pounds.

By October the herds reach the treeline and stay briefly for breeding. The bulls lock antlers and fight to keep a harem of ten or twelve cows. Soon afterward they lose their antlers and become friends again as they grow a new set. The cows lose their antlers in the spring after calving.

The caribou is still an important big-game animal in Alaska today though there are not as many as there were only seventy years ago. During the Gold Rush days, there were so many caribou that often when a herd crossed the Yukon River, it would hold up the paddlewheel steamers for days. The steamers carried people traveling to Alaska's gold fields.

Even in the United States at one time there were many caribou. But in the early 1900's they disappeared because of hunting, logging and forest fires. Many starved to death. A few years ago, a small herd of caribou was flown across the Canadian border onto Mount Katahdin, Maine. Now they are protected and once again our North American reindeer can be seen in parts of the United States. *The End*

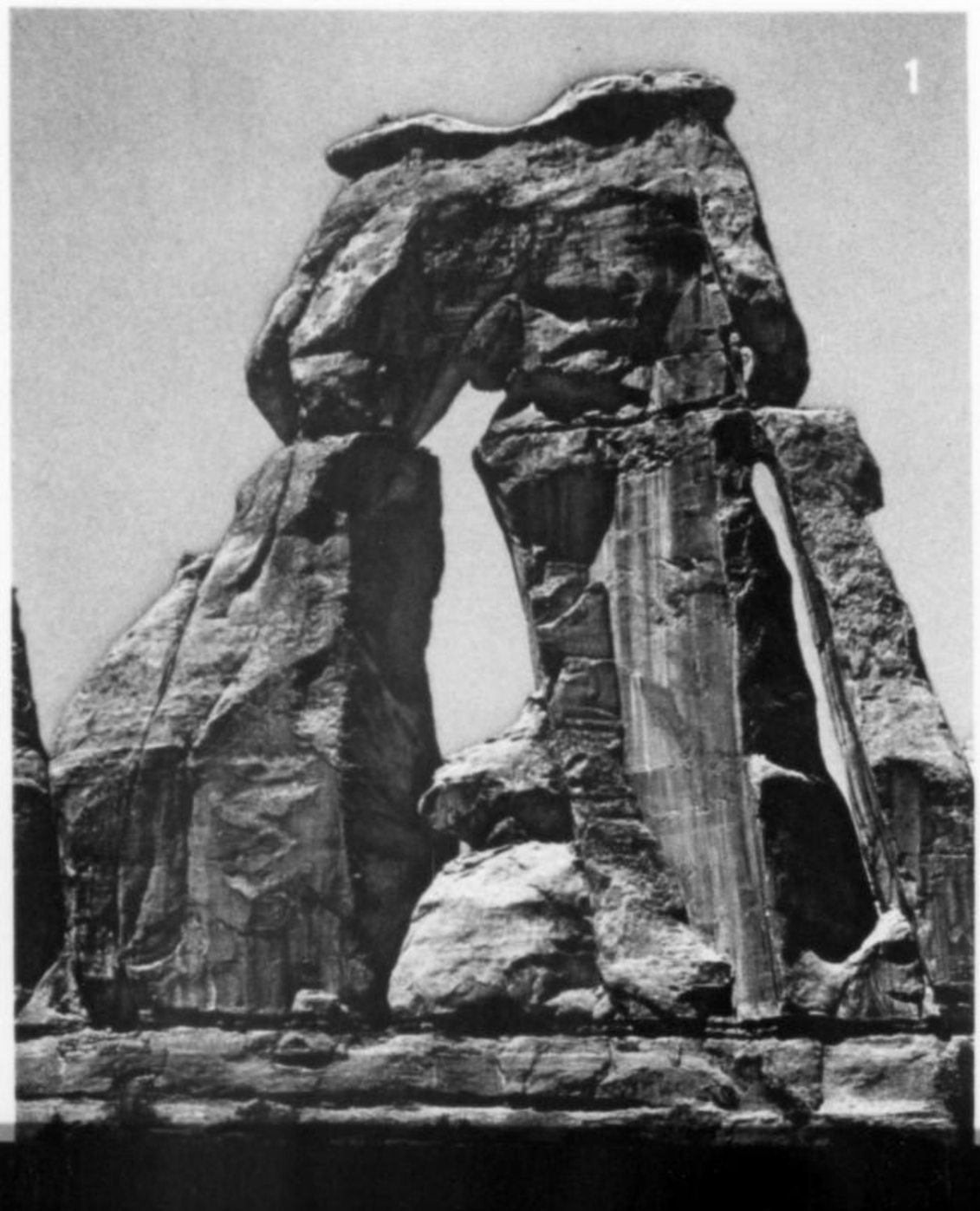
Caribou grazing in Mt. McKinley Nat. Park, Alaska.

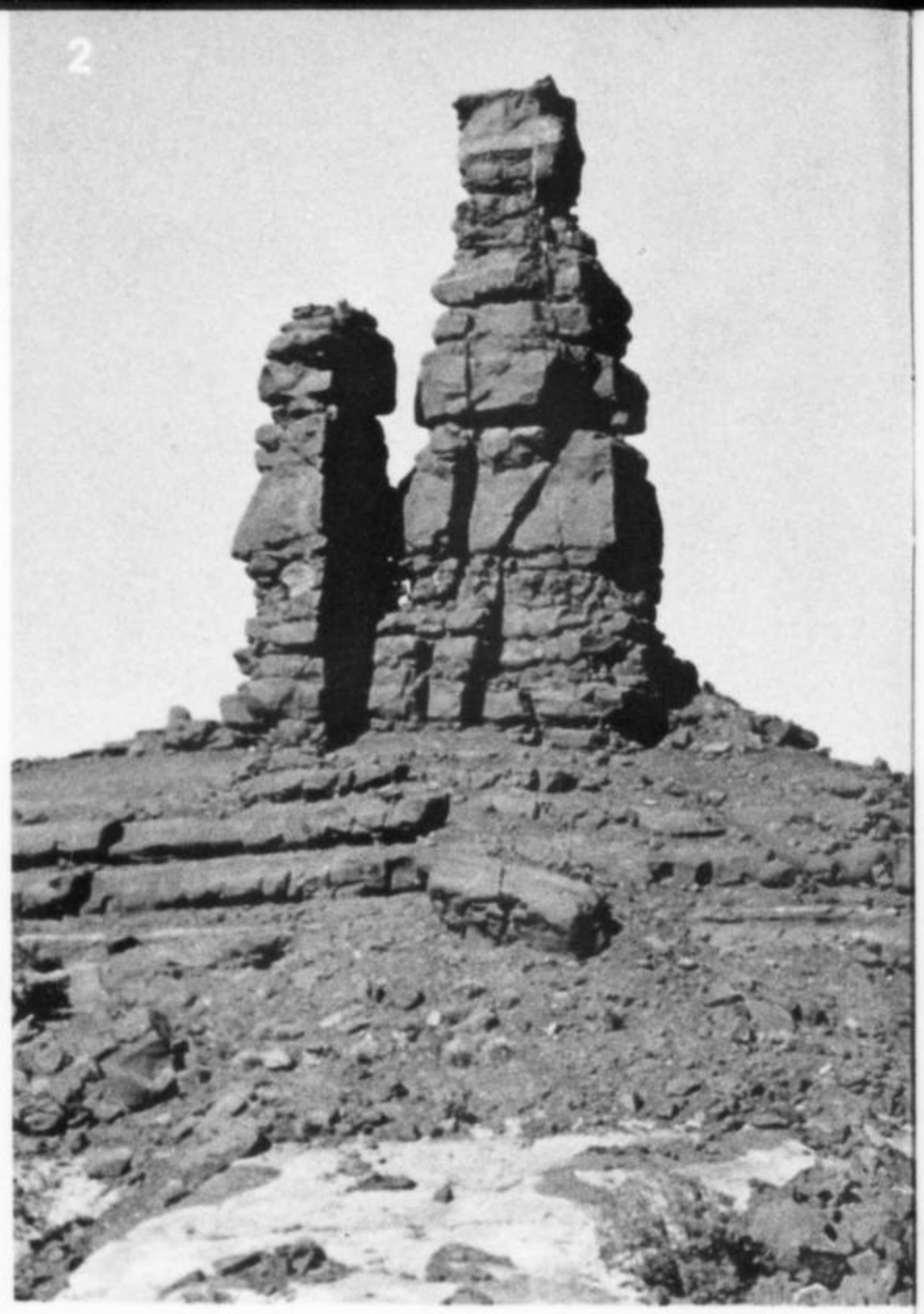
Photo by Steve McCutcheon

What Rangers Saw In Canyonlands

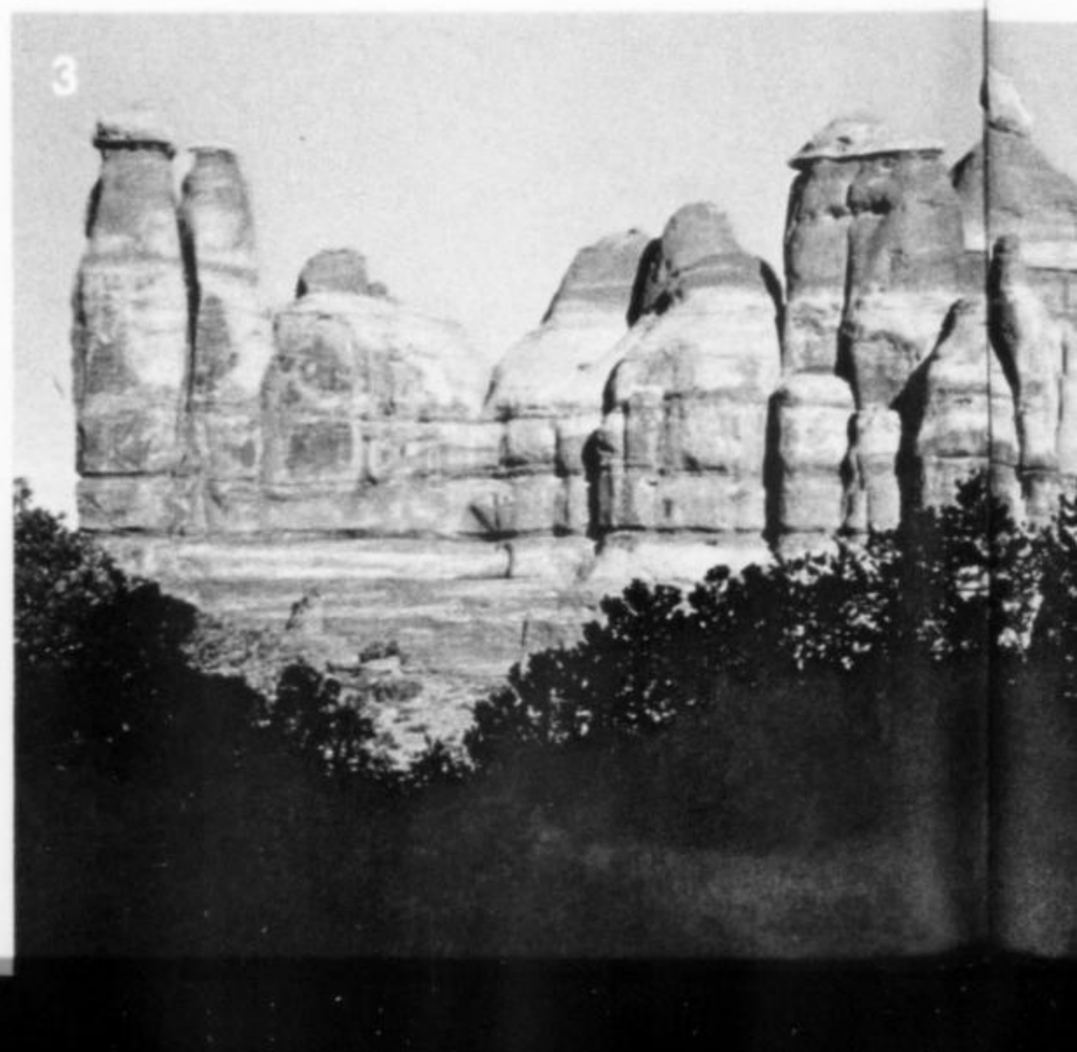
You Rangers really have sharp eyes and big imaginations! I never would have seen all the things you saw in the pictures from Canyonlands National Park that we showed on Pages 4 and 5 of the July issue. But with your help I found them all. Somebody even saw ME in the middle of Picture 3. And somebody else saw this same figure as "two people who made a hat that is big enough for both of them." Can you find it? Then see how good you are at seeing the people, animals and things that many different Rangers found.

RANGER RICK





1 PEOPLE: A husband, wife and child—a lady trying to lie down but her head hit a rock. **ANIMALS:** Two monkeys—two frogs kissing—two dogs whispering to each other—a horse's head and neck propped on two posts. **THINGS:** A bridge—a tunnel—an ancient castle—a fallen fire tower—a motorcycle on a high stand—a giant pair of cowboy pants with chaps—a cavemen's chapel.

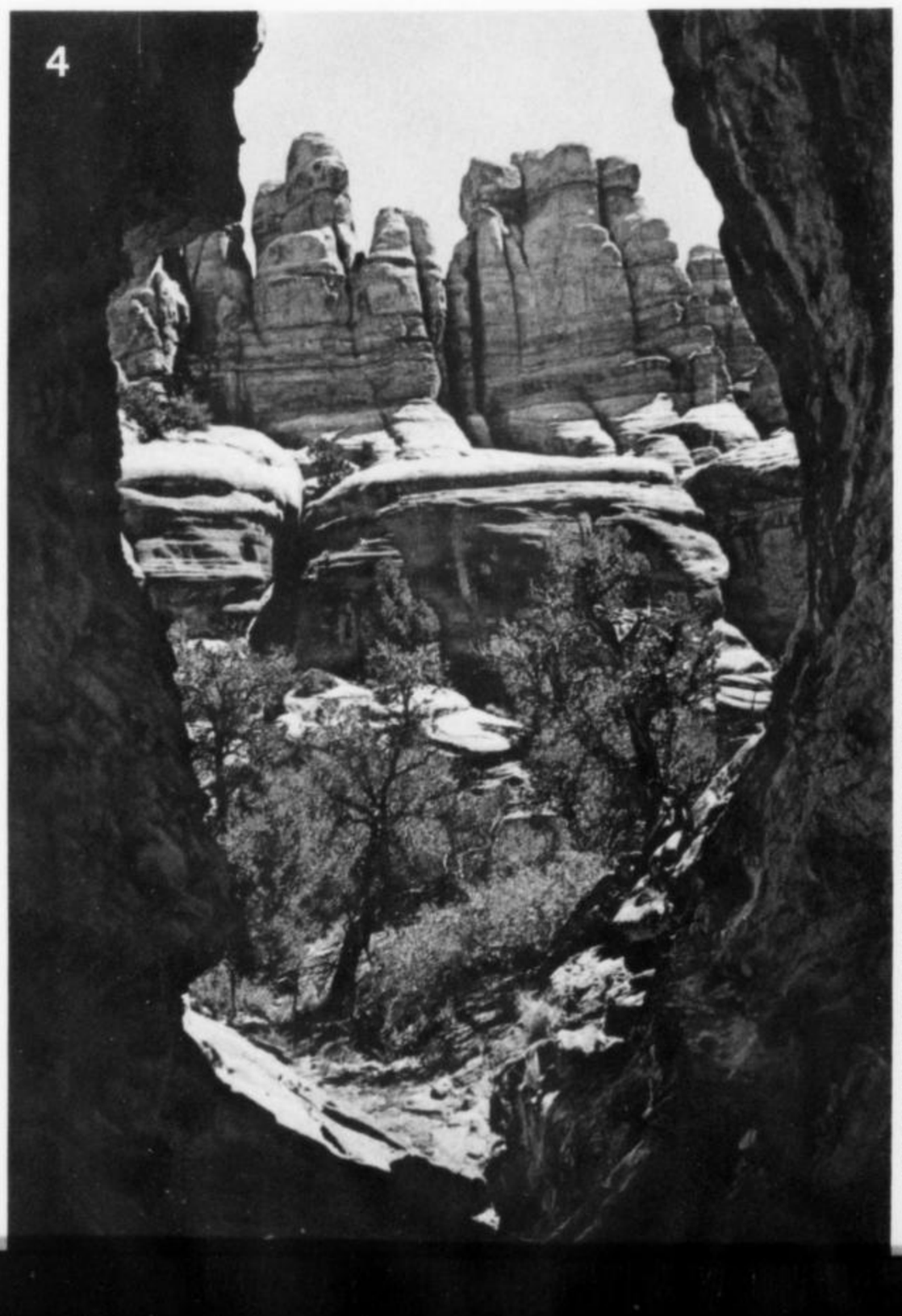


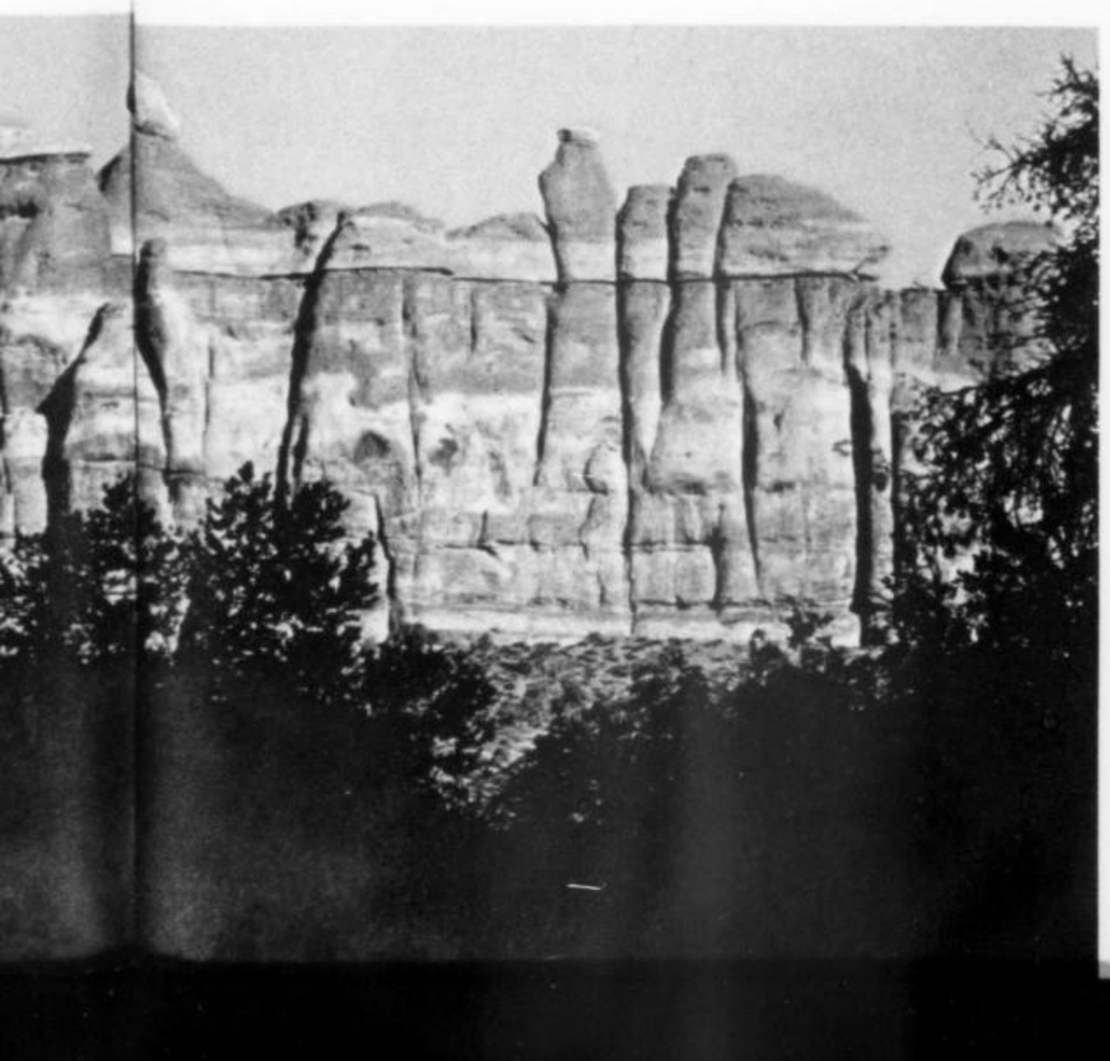
2 PEOPLE: Pioneer woman and child—Indian boy and his father—a lost mother and her child—people looking for food—a lady with a little boy who is six—Mrs. Santa Claus—Santa Claus and an elf looking down at a shopping center—a policeman pointing a gun, and a bandit with his hands up—a big lady and a little man—a powerful king and queen sitting on their thrones at the top of the highest mountain in the world—two people standing on a broken wall above a small log cabin. **THINGS:** Two totem poles—two robots—a chimney—a rocket-launching to the moon. **ANIMALS:** Two prairie dogs—a mother ground squirrel and her baby.

3 PEOPLE: A line of Peruvians with their shawls on, some with hats—people sightseeing—a lot of people at a marketplace—people standing in line to pay for their groceries—an army troop—something interesting has happened and everyone is crowding to see it—lots of men lined up to protect a statue they had carved—a crowd of beings standing on their planet in another galaxy watching the formation of the Milky Way. **ANIMALS:** Two dolphins in the water near a dock—a mommy pig on her back after feeding her piglets. **THINGS:** Bottles and jugs on a table—a city skyline—wall of a fort—bird's-eye view of a large log raft—castle-land.

4 "**When** I look at this picture I think of a person who was blind and by a miracle has been made to see again and is watching a grand parade with floats, clowns, gay things, happy people," wrote one Ranger. **Some** of you also took an inside-looking-out view but with entirely different results. One Ranger said the picture reminded him of someone looking through a telescope. Another said, "I am inside a dinosaur looking out of its mouth." **Others** said, "I am waiting at the open door for guests to come to my party." . . . "A tunnel to the world." . . . "A window to robots." This picture also reminded you of lost people—some men and their foreman waiting for their pay—football players in a huddle—children and their pets—a bear cage—a king and queen on their thrones.

The End





Photos by M. Woodbridge Williams, National Park Service

About the front cover . . .

Drawing by John Quinn

Story and photo by Russ Kinne

I looked at the Christmas wreath on my front door last year and thought that this might be a good place to put some food for the birds. So I set a little cardboard shelf in the middle of the wreath. On it I put some birdseed, peanut butter and a doughnut.

A few days passed before my little cafeteria had customers. Chickadees are very curious, always looking into everything, and sure enough one found the food first. Then other birds saw the chickadee feeding and came in to get their share. Soon there was a regular parade of chickadees, tufted titmice, nuthatches and blue jays.

They were lots of fun to watch and I decided to take their pictures. I set the camera on a tripod, aimed it at the wreath, and set up a remote-control device to set it off. When I pressed a rubber bulb inside the house, air pressure in a long plastic tube clicked the camera shutter outdoors.

This worked fine, but I couldn't see exactly how the bird was posed when I took the picture, and of course every time someone went in or out the door it disturbed the birds and I had to wait until they came back. I had a spare door in the cellar, so I mounted the wreath on it. I set the door outside under the dining-room window where I could see it easily and where the birds would not be disturbed.

After a few days I had taken over a hundred pictures! No two of them were just alike. Sometimes I caught a bird with its wings up as it flew into the wreath or took off with a mouthful of food. Sometimes one bird would be perched on the wreath, and another would fly in. Then I was lucky and got a picture of both of them at once, as you can see on the front cover.

The End

Mr. Whiskers The Otter

Poem by June McLean

I wish I were a beaver,
An otter or sleek muskrat,
Then I'd never need an umbrella,
Rubbers, a raincoat or hat.

They have a built-in raincoat,
When it pours they never fret.
A layer of air in their underfur
Keeps their skin from getting wet.

Please turn the page

Drawing by Jack Weaver

Mr. Whiskers The Otter

Story by Helen Forest McKee

Young animals of the forest like to play games just as boys and girls do. Fawns play follow-the-leader and chase butterflies. Small roly-poly bear cubs wrestle and tumble for hours. The squirrels overhead in the treetops chase each other at a game of tag. But of all the animals that like to have fun, the otter spends more time playing.

Not only the young, but the whole family of otters, play on their favorite slide that slopes down to a quiet body of water. Mud-slick in the summer and ice-slick in the winter, the slide is worn smooth as the otters take their turns. They push off from the top of the bank on their stomachs, all four feet stretched out behind them. Down they go, sliding into the water with a splash.

The younger otters make the water churn as five or six twist and turn at an underwater game of tag.

Next to being soaking wet the otter seems to like nothing better than being perfectly dry. Near the slide are areas of tall grass where they gather to rub and roll themselves dry. The mother and young take turns grooming each other's rich brown fur. The fur becomes paler in color on the stomach, cheeks and chin. Starting at the head, they comb with webbed forefeet and work down the back while they appear to talk to each other in low mumbling tones.

When our bewhiskered friend the otter is full grown, he is 45 to 55 inches long and weighs from fifteen to twenty pounds. He has a tube-like body with a rounded head. His dachshund-like legs are short with webbed feet having five toes each. The tail is long and thick and covered with fur.

Mr. Whiskers likes clear, fresh water that has many kinds of fish in it. Frogs, salamanders, shellfish, and especially crayfish, make up most of Mr. Whiskers' diet.

Please turn the page

Photo by Jack Dermid

Otters spend most of the time in water and sometimes look as though they were begging.

Photo by Russ Kinne, Photo Researchers Inc.

Photo by Jack Dermid

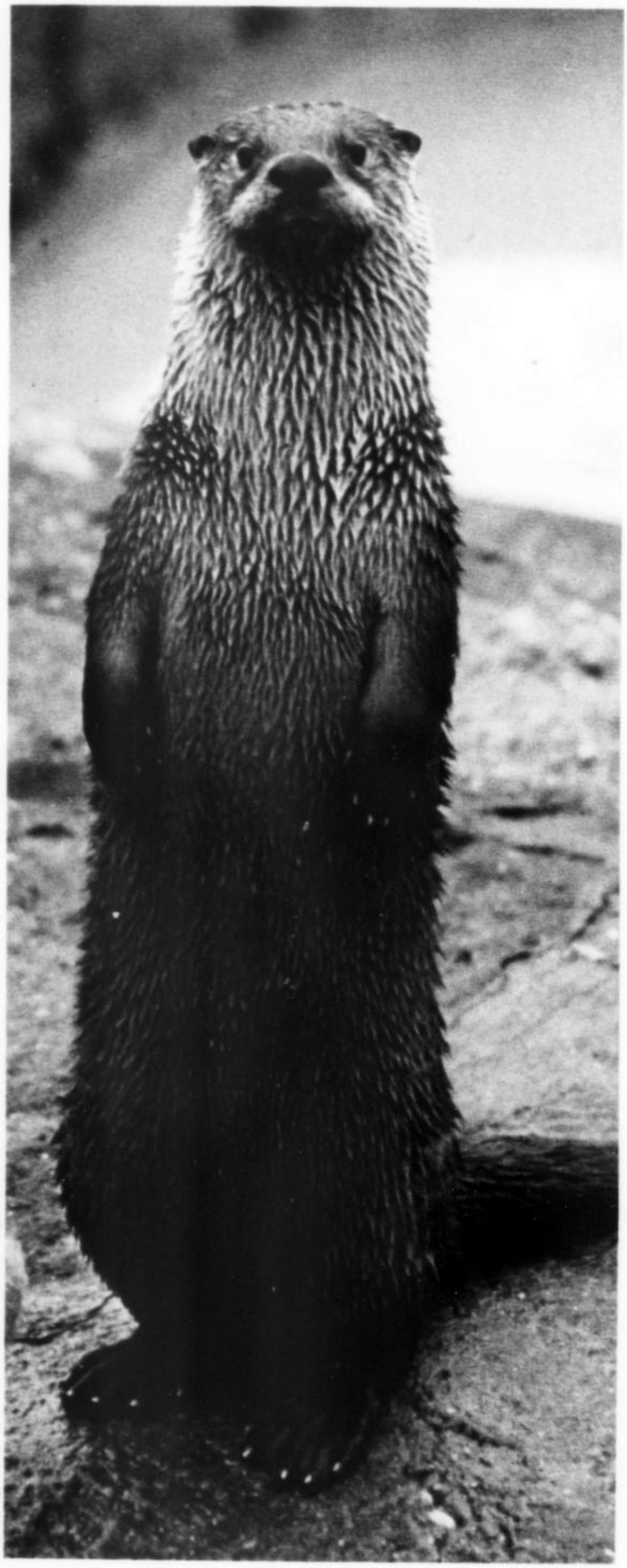


Photo by Russ Kinne at New York Zoological Park

Sometimes otters travel by land, but they have trouble getting where they want to go in a hurry. Their short legs and long sausage-like body slow them up.

The otter, being an all-year-round swimmer, is protected from the cold, icy water in the winter by his two coats and a layer of fat under his skin. His topcoat is made up of a soft dense underfur with long guard hairs. His stomach is covered with a special layer of coarse hair which probably keeps him from rubbing the skin off his tummy with his constant sliding.

Mother and father otter build their nest with care. It is usually located in a blind passage leading from an underground tunnel system which forms their home. Their babies or kits are usually born in April or May. They are born with their eyes closed, and they remain closed for several weeks. When the kits are a month old, mother otter teaches them to swim. After four months, when they are weaned, they are all merrily sliding down their mud-slick slide into the water.

Otters seem to be curious animals as well as fun-loving. If someone or something arouses their interest they will sit up on their hind legs, supported by their thick tail. The forelegs hang limp as Mr. Whiskers leans forward to see what is going on. With whiskers twitching he will sit erect for a long time until he is satisfied that everything is all right. And then with a splash he is gone, back to his family and that wonderful slide he seems never to tire of. So if you are ever near a pond or a river where there are otters, be perfectly still. Maybe Mr. Whiskers will come out of the water and beg for you or better still, maybe you will see the whole otter family sliding down their favorite slide and playing water tag. *The End*

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS FROM ALL OUTDOORS

The wonderlands of our fields and forests, mountains and seashores have so many, many materials that can be used to make beautiful holiday trimmings. It doesn't matter where you live because the next nine pages are full of ideas from all over the country.

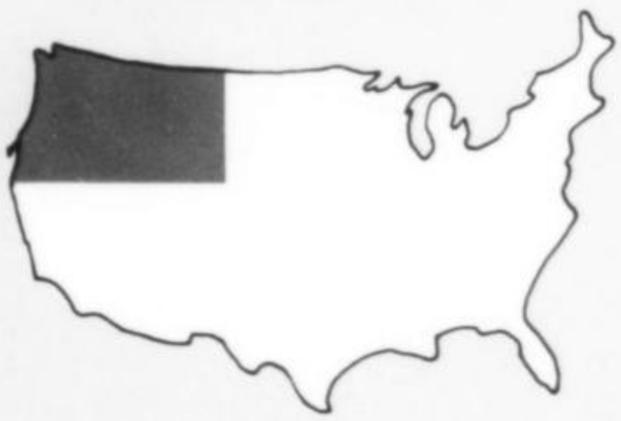
Please turn the page

Photo by
Joe Van Wormer

1

by Joe Van Wormer

THE NORTH WEST



The pioneers who traveled west over the treeless prairie must have been full of joy when they reached the great evergreen forests of the Northwest.

Like children everywhere, the boys and girls who had made the long trip were looking forward to their first Christmas in this new land. It was no doubt a happy holiday. There may have been a shortage of presents, but there was no shortage of natural materials to decorate their log cabins.

Evergreens have been a symbol of everlasting life since ancient times. In this new country they seemed to be everywhere.

Western youngsters today have much the same feeling for Christmas that their pioneer ancestors did. Even though there are many man-made decorations to be bought in stores, it is the traditional evergreens gathered in the woods that are preferred.

An important part of the pre-Christmas fun is gathering the evergreen branches, mistletoe and pine cones to be used at home.

2

Lynda Gervais, age 10, and her brother Ricky, age 7, live in Bend, Oregon, where many kinds of evergreen trees grow. On a greens-gathering walk with their mother and dad they looked for juniper and mistletoe. In the picture on Page 19 Lynda has found a good-looking branch. It's best to look for branches that are near the ground.

In picture 1 they have found just what they were looking for. Juniper is a favorite green in much of the West. It has a nice woodsy odor and graceful branches which make pretty decorations.

A simple table decoration can be made by combining a juniper branch with a piece of driftwood like the one in picture 2.

Another traditional plant used for decorating is mistletoe. The western type of mistletoe grows on juniper trees as a parasite. So it was not unusual that Lynda and Ricky found the two plants growing together. Juniper is not often used for lumber or any other purpose and mistletoe has no value other than for decoration, so these two plants are especially popular for holiday decorations and there are no limits about gathering them.

During their walk in the Deschutes National Forest of central Oregon, Lynda and Ricky found large cones from the sugar pine tree and smaller ones from the ponderosa pine. In picture 3 Ricky is comparing the sizes of these two popular pine cones.

The giant sugar pine cone would be just right for making a "Sugar-Plum Tree" like the one

3

on Page 2. These cones are the largest in the world. They are from 12 to 15 inches long.

Pine cones can be used in making wreaths, candleholders, sprays and centerpieces, as well as ornaments for your Christmas tree. On the next few pages you will find directions for making many things with the cones you gather.

Ponderosa pine branches with their long green needles and small brown cones are very popular for making beautiful sprays and table decorations. Picture 5 shows a simple centerpiece made by arranging branches in the bottom of an upside down vase.

In picture 4 the ponderosa pine branches have been combined with sugar pine cones to make a lovely door decoration.

Gathering evergreens for decorations today is not quite the same as it was when the pioneers arrived in the Northwest. The

Photos by Joe Van Wormer

4

supply was unlimited in those days. Things are different now because much of the timber has been cut for lumber. There are so many people looking for Christmas greens that the forests could be badly damaged if no rules were made for gathering evergreens. However, there is still enough for everyone if they take only those things the forests can spare. If someone owns the property be sure to ask the owner for permission.

5 *Please turn the page*

1

by Anne Johnson

THE NORTH EAST

2

3

A Ranger Rick Nature Club project began when the members decided to collect materials to make Christmas decorations at their meetings.

First the Rangers visited with a Christmas tree farmer who let them have branches that he had trimmed from his evergreen trees.

Each Ranger carried back three fat spruce or pine branches to make a door decoration. The only other supplies needed were thin wire, a few big cones and a red ribbon bow. In picture 1, two members are working on a spray.

You can make one for your front door. Just put the cut ends of three branches together, bind them tightly with wire, tie on three or four big cones and fasten on the red bow. It will look like the one in picture 4 on Page 21 when finished. What a nice welcome for holiday visitors!

At their very next meeting the Rangers made a candleholder. All you need is a heavy cardboard box, one bottle cap, scissors, glue and small cones, nuts and seeds.

First, cut a cardboard circle as big as a saucer. Then glue the bottle cap upside down in the center. (Look at picture 3.) Melt a bit of an old candle into the cap and stick the shiny red candle into the warm wax.

Then carefully arrange six medium-sized pine cones around the candle in the center. Around the edges glue some acorns and smaller cones so that all of the cardboard is covered.

Another candleholder is easily made from a twelve-inch piece of white birch or aspen cut in half. Drill three holes to hold red or green candles as in picture 4. It is safer to use these only as decorations and not to light the candles.

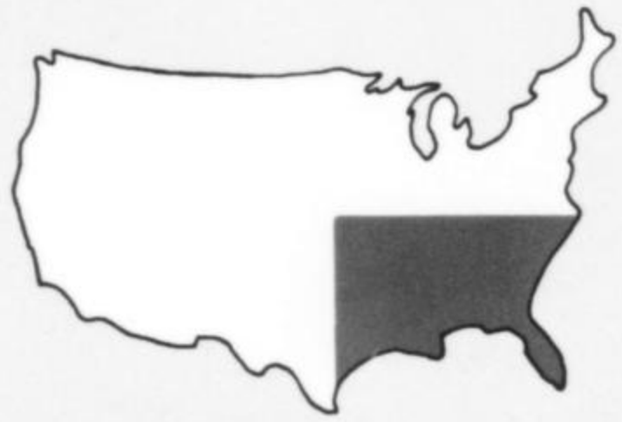
The Rangers had fun making a simple tree ornament from cones like the one in picture 2. A big cone for the body, four little spruce cones wired on for legs, two small bunches of white pine needles on a red pine cone for the head and . . . presto! it's all finished.

Please turn the page

4

Photos by Duncan McDougall

THE SOUTHEAST



by Nancy Roberts

Photos by Bruce Roberts; Rapho Guillumette

1

Second Annual Ranger Rick's Nature Club Contest

PRIZES

- A $1000.00 College Scholarship Trust Fund, payable on graduation from High School and acceptance in an accredited college or university.
- An all-expense-paid trip for the winner and parents to Houston, Texas, to attend a session of the National Wildlife Federation Annual Meeting.
- 10 sets of children's bird and animal books.
- 100 sets of Wildlife Trading Cards and Albums.

RULES

1. This contest is open only to individual paid up members of Ranger Rick's Nature Club 12 years old and younger.
2. Decision of the judges is final. Entries will first be judged within their own age group. From the best in each age group the finalists will be chosen. In selecting the winners of the two top awards, due allowance for age will be made. An officer of a nearby National Wildlife Federation state or local club may be asked to visit some finalists before the two top awards are made.
3. Entries should be mailed to Ranger Rick's Nature Club, Box 2299, Philadelphia, Pa. 19103. All entries must be postmarked no later than February 1, 1968. No entry will be returned.

OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM INFORMATION
(Please Print)

Ranger's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Ranger Rick's Nature Club MEMBERSHIP NUMBER _____

Age _____ Date of Birth _____
Month Day Year

INSTRUCTIONS

This contest has four parts, based on Ranger Rick's Pledge. Carefully work out your answers to each part before copying them in the spaces allotted. If you need more space for any part, continue it on another sheet of paper the same size as this. At the top of each extra sheet, print the Part Number and your Name, Age and Address.

PART I

"I pledge to use my eyes to see the beauty of all outdoors."

Tell whether you live in the country, a small town, the suburbs or a city. Then make a list of ten of your favorite beautiful things in nature that you enjoy right in your own neighborhood. They can be tiny as a dew drop or large as a sunset. They can be related to landscapes, skies, weather, seasons, plants, animals, insects or whatever. Be specific. In other words, don't just say "a squirrel" but say what special thing or things make a squirrel seem beautiful to you. Remember, too, that your ears and nose and sense of touch often help your eyes to discover and appreciate nature's beauty.

PART II

"I pledge to train my mind to learn the importance of nature."

Life as we know it would not be possible without SUN, WATER, AIR and SOIL. Choose ONE of these and give as many reasons as you can why life depends on it.

_____

_____

_____

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PART III

"I pledge to use my hands to protect soil, water, woods and wildlife."

Name what you consider one of the most important things people can do to protect each of the following:

SOIL _____

WATER _____

WOODS _____

WILDLIFE _____

Choose ONE of the above and tell in one sentence something a child can do to protect it.

_____

_____

_____

PART IV

"And, by my good example, I pledge to show others how to respect, properly use and enjoy our natural resources."

Imagine you are on a picnic with a group of boys and girls your age. The picnic is in a woods by the side of a stream. Everybody has brought his own lunch and there is a campfire under adult supervision. Tell some of the things you could do during the day and before you leave to be sure you are keeping Part IV of Ranger Rick's Pledge.

You will earn extra credit if your teacher or a local Conservation or Garden Club Officer reviews and signs your entry.

Signature _____

School or Organization _____

Address _____

Did you ever think it was possible to find things for Christmas decorations on the beach?

If you live near the ocean or if you collected shells on vacation in the summer you can use them to make beautiful Christmas ornaments. They can be used to give the appearance of treasures of the Orient if you place them at the base of your tree.

Shells that are nice to use are the angel wings, scallops, snails, sailor's ears and conch shells, to name only a few. For variety, try other things like starfish, sea horses, sand dollars, sea urchins and sea biscuits if you have them.

First, spray the objects with gold paint and wait for them to dry. Then stick a branch from a pyracantha bush firmly into a heavy metal flowerholder. Put it in a low container with a little water to keep the branch fresh and green.

Hang your smallest and lightest shells on the branch, using clear nylon thread. Spread the heavier ones on the table at the base as they are in picture 1.

If you haven't collected things from the seacoast, you can find decorating materials right in your yard or in nearby fields and

4

2

woods. The whole family can go along to gather interesting nuts and seed pods found everywhere.

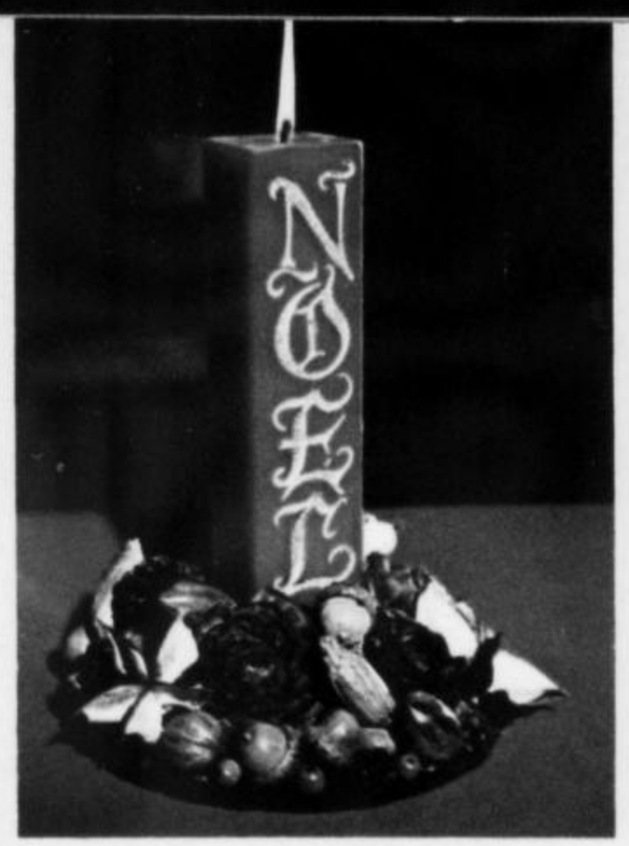
Look for hickory nuts, pecans, acorns, all sizes of pine cones, the seed pod of the tulip poplar tree, pods from cedar trees and the gum balls which pricked your feet when you were barefoot last summer.

A trip in the car may take you past a cotton field. Stop and pick some of the empty bolls. These and the other dried materials you have gathered can be used for a wreath like that in picture 2.

Ask your dad or the local lumberyard to saw a piece of ¼-inch plywood into a circle about 12 inches across. Then cut a hole in the center 6 inches in diameter.

Sort all of the materials you are planning to use into separate piles. Have plenty of clear-drying glue on hand.

The first step is to glue the materials in place around the outside edge of the plywood. You might use two nuts of each kind, such as two pecans and two hickory nuts, alternating the pairs of nuts. Do the same thing on the inside circle. This makes a good guide to go by.



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Next take some acorn hulls and glue them to the bare plywood in the center. These hulls will make a base on which to glue your other materials. It will make the wreath higher in the center and lower on the edges and give it a nice curved effect.

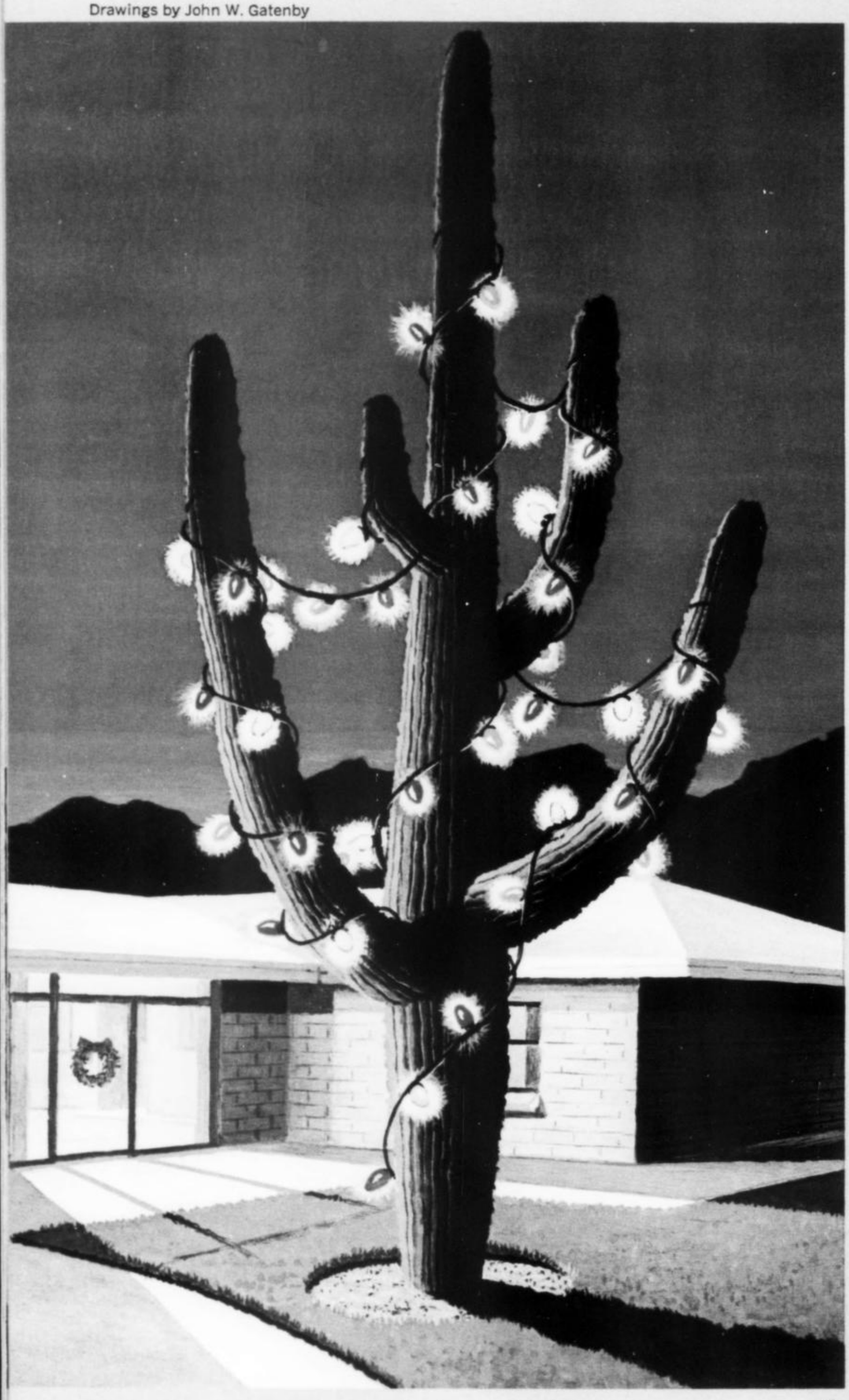
Using lots of glue, add the rest of the things you have gathered. As a last bit of trimming use the empty cotton bolls and you will feel like a real artist. Now give the glue 48 hours to dry.

There is one last step you should take if your wreath is to stay lovely. Insects like to eat nuts, so spray your wreath with a good insect spray. It will dry in just a few minutes and then you can spray it with clear shellac to bring out the warm wood tones and use it for many Christmases to come. A big green or red ribbon bow at the top puts the finishing touch to your wreath.

You can make a candleholder in just the same way except that you will need a circle of plywood about 5 or 6 inches in diameter and a candle 2 inches thick. You could use the inside circle left over from the wreath. It would look like picture 3.

Please turn the page

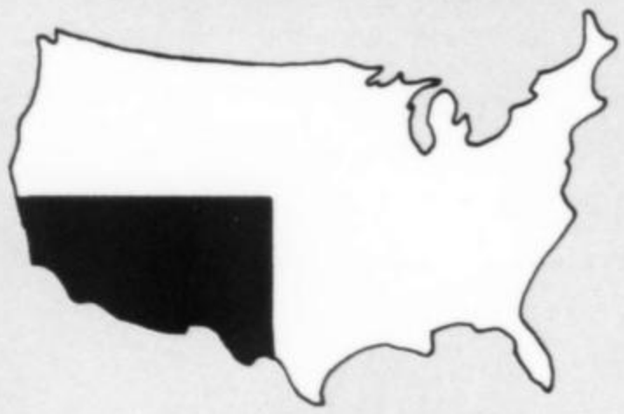
Drawings by John W. Gatenby



1

by Ivah Green

THE SOUTH WEST



With its hundreds of miles of desert and high mountains the Southwest provides such a wide variety of natural materials from which Christmas trimmings can be made. There are huge forests of pine, fir and spruce growing in the mountains. Juniper and other kinds of evergreens are planted in yards of homes in the cities. At holidaytime trees brought from the mountains and trees in people's yards sparkle with tinsel, icicles, ornaments and colored lights. There is nothing new or different in these customs.

But there are things growing in the Southwest that belong especially to desert country. So, for many of our decorations we turn to cactus, which is one of our most common plants. We even transform tumbleweed into something attractive.

The giant saguaro (sa WAH ro)

becomes a Christmas tree. This "King of the Desert" is the largest of all cactuses in the United States. It is very slow-growing, tall and very heavy. A really big old giant may be 50 feet high, 200 years old and weigh 20,000 pounds. (That's as much as a trailer truck.)

At Christmastime some people decorate the saguaro with many-colored outdoor lights. Look at the one in picture 1.

Another custom in the Southwest is to put out a welcome sign in the form of luminarios. The word luminario comes from luminous, meaning "full of light."

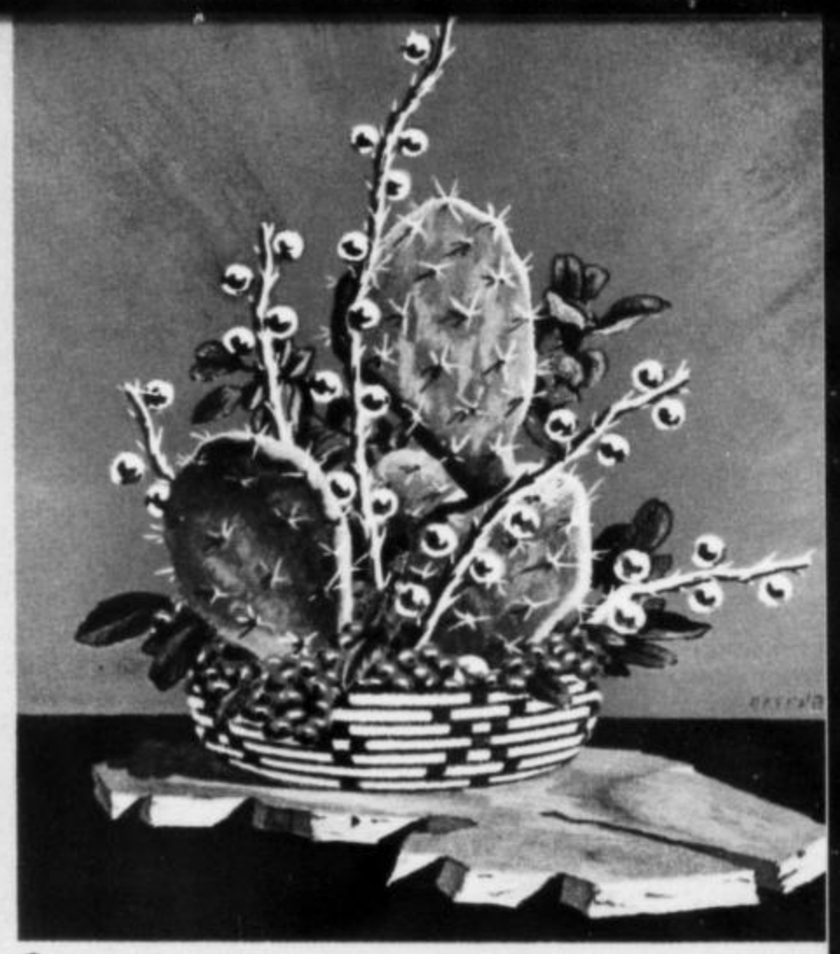
Luminarios are paper grocery bags with lighted candles inside. The bags are set up along a sidewalk or driveway as in picture 2. Each bag is folded down 3 or 4 inches at the top and 3 inches of sand is poured in. A short, thick candle is stuck firmly into the sand.

At sundown the candles are lit. The luminarios are wind-proof and the flame will not touch the paper bag, so they are not a fire hazard.

Inside our homes it is quite common to find a holiday centerpiece made from the prickly pear cactus, like the one in picture 3. The container for this arrangement is a basket woven by a Papago Indian out of yucca fiber and bear grass, both plentiful in the desert country of Arizona.

The basket holds prickly pear cactus, ocotillo branches and pyracantha berries, our own particular kind of "holly" with its crisp green leaves and masses of plump orange-red berries.

The prickly pear is an ornamental cactus. Sometimes it has flowers, sometimes it has fruit; but always it has needle-sharp prickles so "Handle with care!"



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In this arrangement, the prickly pear needs no trimmings. It is pretty just as it is. But the bare branches of ocotillo are just the thing to hold tiny tree ornaments by its thorns. The pyracantha berries add a touch of color.

The desert furnishes the makings for Christmas bells. After the white flowers of the yucca plant fall off, the dried seed pods

Please turn the page

2

are left on the stalk. You can cut off the pods and paint them bright colors. A tiny tree ornament on wire can be used to make a fine clapper. Hang them on ribbons as they are in picture 4.

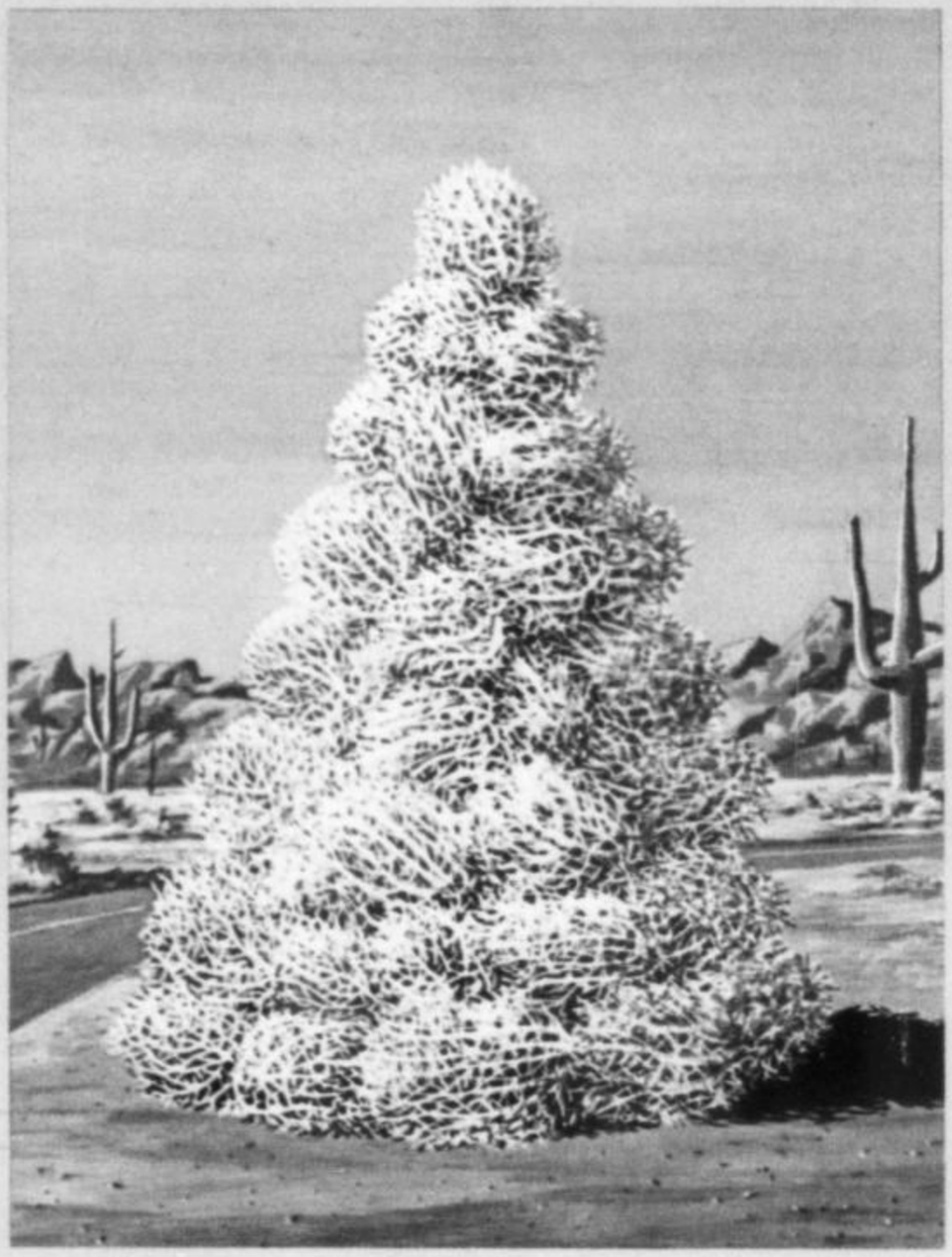
The tumbleweed, when dry and brown and full of seeds, breaks off from its roots and tumbles along the desert floor.

Someone watching a tumbleweed in action saw something besides a mass of branches and weedseeds. A single tumbleweed was sprayed with silver paint and hung upside down from a beam in the ceiling. It looked so attractive that another idea was born: "Take tumbleweeds and make a big Christmas tree."

Many tumbleweeds heaped into a tall mound and sprayed with gold or silver or artificial snow make a rare and lovely tree. On a front lawn with colored lights shining through, this "tree" looks like delicate lace. Picture 5.

Or you might decide to make a tumbleweed snowman like the one in picture 6 which was photographed in El Paso, Texas. Just pile your tumbleweeds in three round balls, make a face and belt and buttons from waterproof plastic and top him off with a dashing hat. **The End**

4



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6

Photo by Grace Thompson

Ranger Rick And His Friends

by J. A. Brownridge

Adventure 10
Danger, Thin Ice!

"Look at that big trainload of Christmas trees, Rick."

Rick and his good friend, Ollie Otter, were sitting on a snow-covered hillside looking out over the valley where a railroad track ran into Bigtown.

Ollie was pointing to a train loaded with cut Christmas trees on the way to be sold for the holidays.

"Isn't that an awful waste, Rick?" asked Ollie. "Just think of all the beautiful trees that could still be growing in the forest and making homes for our wildlife."

"No, Ollie," laughed Rick. "It's no waste at all. Most of the Christmas trees sold today were grown on farms just for this use. It's like a farmer growing corn. It's a crop, but it takes a lot longer to grow.

"Maybe you've noticed that Christmas trees today are much better shaped and prettier than before. That's because tree farmers take good care of them, prune them and keep plenty of space around them. Then the branches grow well and close to the ground. Trees that grow in the forest don't get such good care and are uneven and not so well shaped. No one should feel any different about using a Christmas tree than they do about eating vegetables or cereal. They're all grown by farmers."

Please turn the page

"Gee, Rick, I didn't know that. I just thought a bunch of men went out in the woods and chopped down trees as fast as they could."

"A lot of people think the same thing," Rick said, "but it's against the law to go into the woods and chop down trees that don't belong to you. People used to do it a lot. But they don't often do it these days.

"There's another good thing about Christmas trees," continued Rick. "People often put them to good use. After all the decorations are off, they can be piled up in fields to make good shelters for wildlife. Many others are piled in gullies to help control soil erosion. Sometimes an old tree is stood up in the back yard and food placed on it for birds. So you can see how even these farm-grown trees help wildlife in many ways."

"Well, I guess we'd better be getting home, Rick," said Ollie. "It's getting a little cold up here. It will be warmer after we cross Clear Creek and get back into Deep Green Wood."

Off the two friends trotted. Ollie skipped happily through the snow and every time he came to a nice steep hill he ran and slid down with yelps of pleasure.

"Gee, this is almost as much fun as my slide over at Shady Pond," gasped Ollie as he popped his head out of a snowdrift he had landed in. "Ever since the pond froze over last week, I haven't had much fun. We'll have to come here more often."

"Never mind that now," Rick replied, smiling at his friend's happiness. "We've got to get moving or we'll miss dinner."

"Look who's flying across the field so fast," said Ollie. "It's Frances Flicker and she seems upset. Let's run and see."

When they got close enough, Rick heard what Frances was calling out to him.

"Rick!" she cried frantically. "Oscar Rabbit fell through the ice on Shady Pond and we can't get him out."

Rick didn't wait to find out how or why it had happened. He and Ollie set out as fast as they could run across the snow-covered field.

As they came close to the pond, they could see an excited group of animals on the shore. Right out in the middle of the pond was Oscar Rabbit. Only his head, his long ears and his paws could be seen as he clutched desperately at the broken ice around him.

"Hold on, Oscar," Rick called. "We'll get you out quickly."

"Davey Deer tried to reach him," Chester Chipmunk said, "but the ice started to crack under him and he had to return."

"Davey, you run and get Billy Beaver from his lodge as quickly as you can," ordered Rick. Then he said, "Everyone else help get this fallen branch out on the ice."

Drawings by Lorin Thompson

Off Davey Deer ran through the woods to get Bill. All the other animals grabbed a big, fallen tree limb and pushed it out on the ice towards Oscar.

"H-h-h-hurry, Rick," pleaded Oscar through chattering teeth. "I'm about frozen to death."

Slowly and carefully Rick crept out on the branch over the ice, but when he got to the end, he still couldn't quite reach his unhappy friend. He stretched as far as he could, but his paw just missed the poor rabbit.

Frantically, Oscar struggled to pull himself up, but every time he pulled, the ice broke a little more and back he fell into the water, getting colder and wetter each time.

"Don't do that, Oscar," Rick commanded sternly. "You're only making it worse."

But poor Oscar was so frightened and so cold that he just struggled harder. Suddenly both paws slipped off the ice and down he went completely out of sight.

A big groan went up from all the animals on the shore. They were sure their friend was gone. But suddenly, to their great surprise, Oscar popped right out of the hole like a cork out of a bottle. Across the ice he slid to where Rick could catch him and pull him up onto the tree branch.

Please turn the page

All the animals were so amazed that they stood there with mouths open, not making a sound.

Then they saw what had happened. Up through the hole in the ice came another head. It was Billy Beaver grinning from ear to ear. Davey Deer had told him the story and, without waiting a second, Billy had gone out the underwater door to his lodge and had swum under the ice up Clear Creek and into Shady Pond. He got there just as Oscar was going under. With a mighty heave, he had pushed the drowning rabbit back up through the hole and into the grasp of his friend.

Quickly Oscar was pulled back to shore, bundled up in blankets and rushed back to his home to dry out and get warm again. All the animals cheered and patted Billy Beaver on the back for being such a hero.

When everything had settled down again, Rick called all the animals together.

"What happened, Oscar?" Rick asked. "Were you playing on the ice?"

"No, Rick," Oscar replied. "I was just lazy. When I saw ice on the pond, I decided to go across it instead of going around as I usually do. I didn't even hear the ice crack. All of a sudden I was in the water and couldn't get out. I was lucky Frances Flicker was there and saw me. She rushed off and got help for me."

"You must always be very careful when you are crossing or playing on the ice," said Rick, "especially early in the winter when the ice may not be thick enough to hold you. It takes several days of very cold weather to make it thick enough to walk on. Then too, air bubbles often form over running water, making thin spots even in the coldest weather.

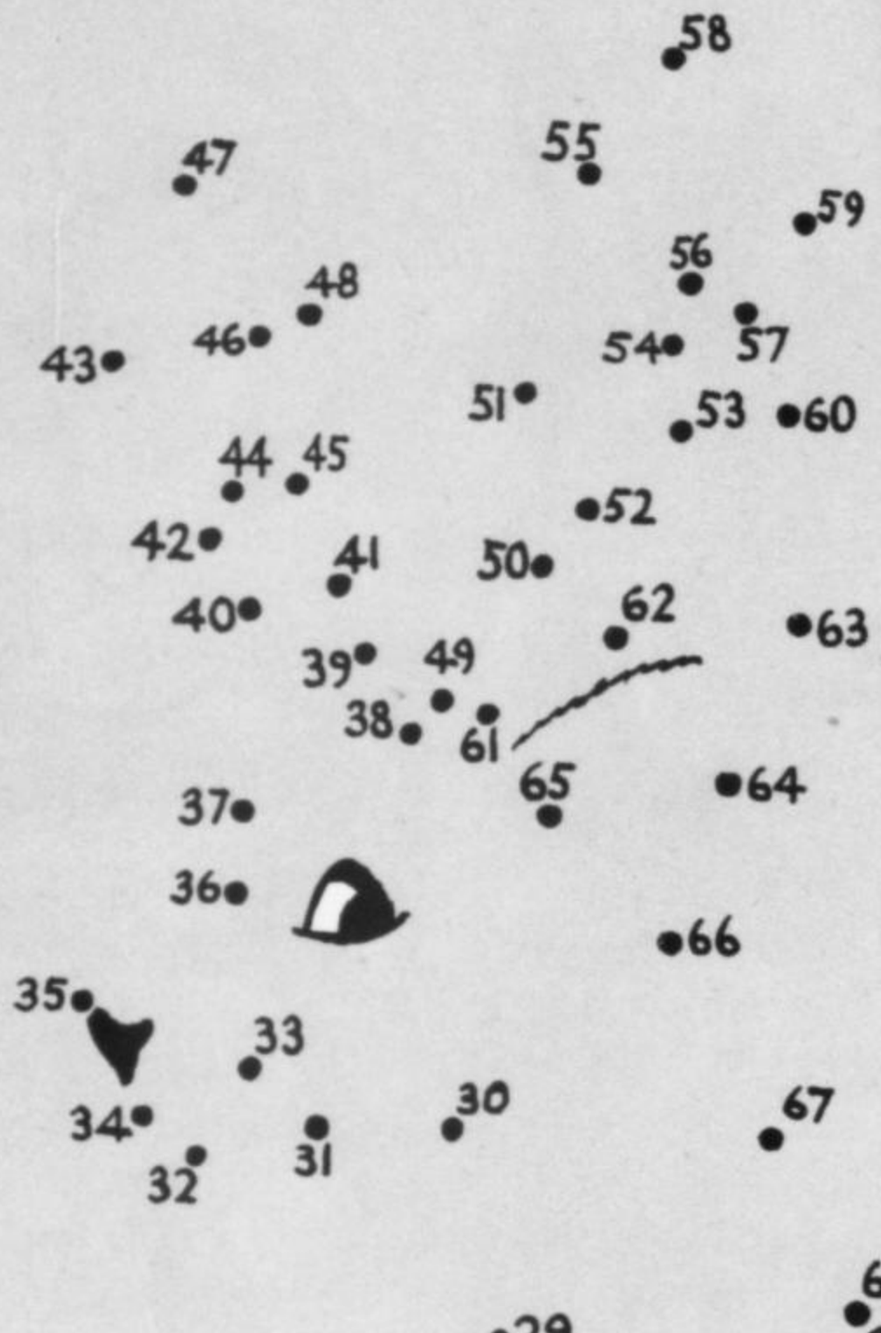
"If someone does fall through the ice, don't try to walk out to help him. Send someone for help first. Then try to find boards or branches to put over the ice. This spreads your weight over a bigger area of ice and makes it less dangerous. Then if you can find a rope or stick, try to get that to him so he can hold on and be pulled out.

"But most of all, please be sure the ice is safe, Then have as much fun as you wish."

The End

Drawings by
Lorin Thompson

Holiday Greetings from Ranger Rick and his friends!



Follow the dots and see who is here.

by Peggie Geiszel

Unscramble these Christmas words to fit their meanings.

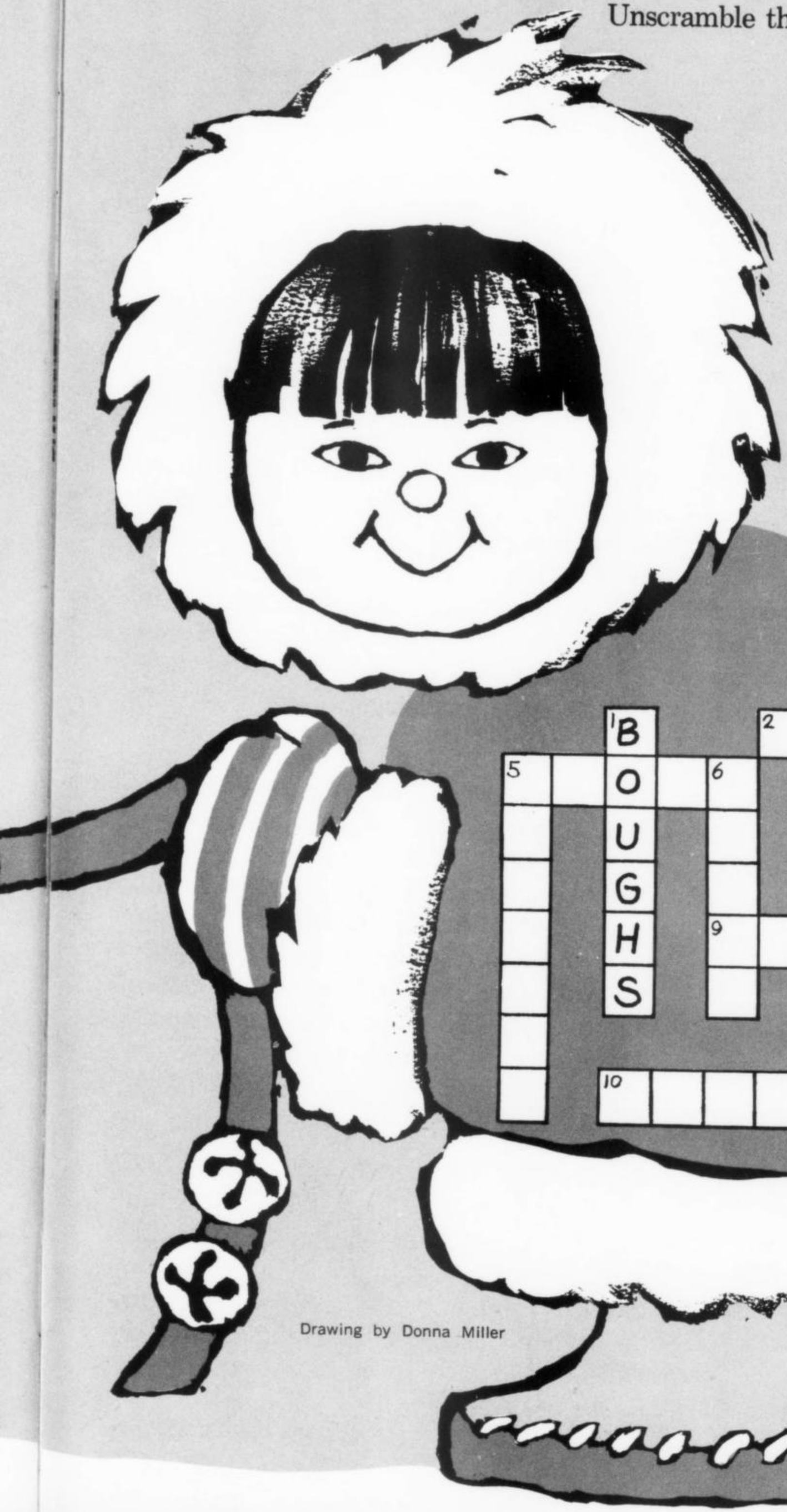
ACROSS:

2. sown—It comes in flakes
5. tosob—High shoes
8. lone—French for Christmas
9. islent—Shiny decoration
10. ragus—Used to make candy

DOWN:

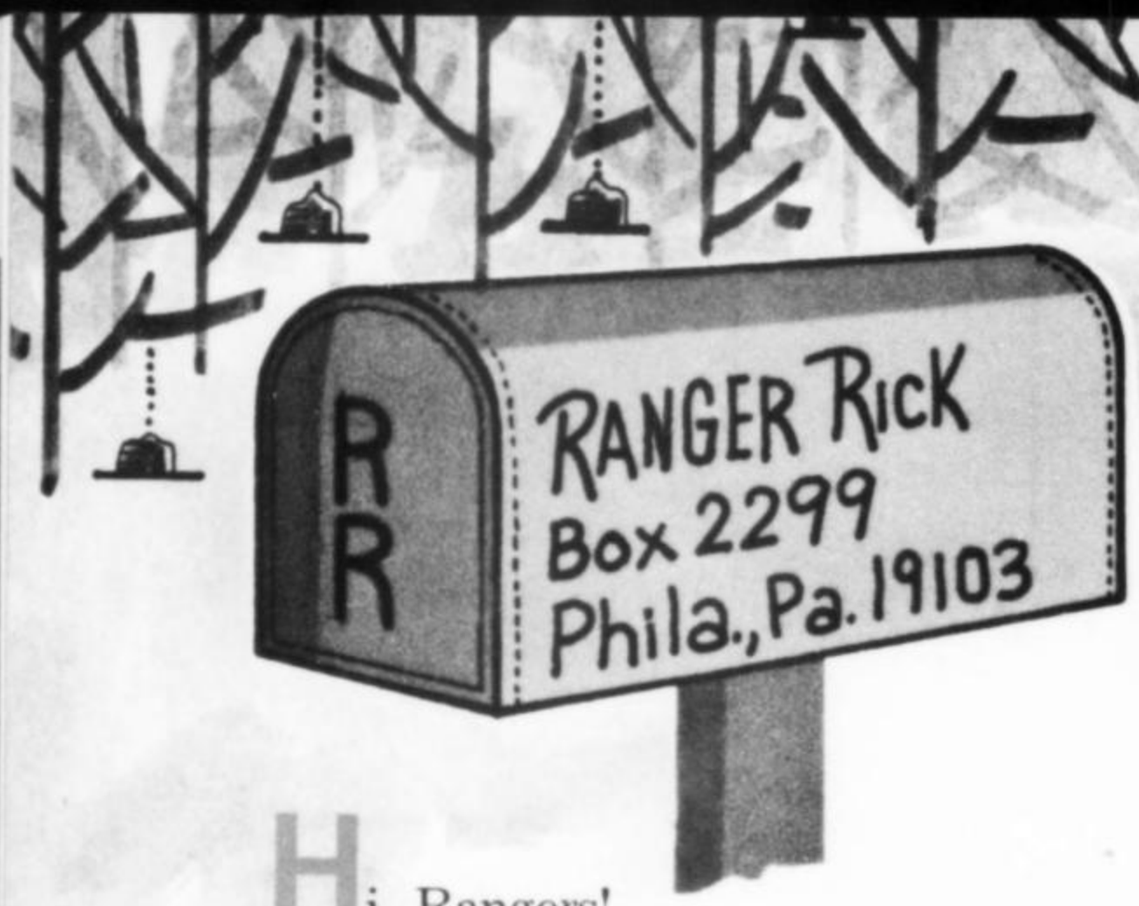
1. hobgus—Parts of a tree
3. wrenit—Cold season
4. lestin—"_____ Night"
5. ribsere—Holly has red ones
6. tanas—_____ Claus
7. redcan—A reindeer's name in a Christmas story

by Mary Frances Hildreth



Drawing by Donna Miller

Answers to puzzle on page 39.



ALONG THE NATURE CLUB TRAIL WITH RANGER RICK

Hi, Rangers!

In the very first issue of our magazine, last January, I introduced my friends of Deep Green Wood to you. Since our beloved forest home is right on the edge of Storyland, we can do things you might not expect of animals. We also get to know many of your favorite book people and animals.

One of my most unusual friends in Storyland is Doctor John Dolittle, healer of animals and fearless voyager to faraway places. He took the trouble to learn the language of animals, birds and sea creatures. The sick ones could tell him where it hurt, so he could help them.

Doctor Dolittle was the brainchild of author Hugh Lofting. Chances are your parents read about the doctor's strange and funny adventures when they were your age. Now you will be able to see a movie about him. I am sure you will enjoy it. But just in case you are meeting my friend for the first time, this is only the beginning of your fun and adventures with him. Hugh Lofting wrote twelve books about Doctor Dolittle. You'll find them in schools and public libraries—usually well thumbed from so many children reading them.

Hugh Lofting's characters are so strange-yet-real, that I was curious about how he ever invented them in the first place. Of course my friend Doctor Dolittle could not tell me that. So I called on a real-life friend, Jean Berg, who writes books for children. She told me that Hugh Lofting is no longer living but that his youngest son, Christopher, lives in New York City. She agreed to visit him and try to find the answer. Her story begins on the next page.

Good News! The rules for Official Branches of the National Ranger Rick's Nature Club have been changed to make it easier for you to start Neighborhood and Class Nature Clubs. To help even more, an Information Kit is ready for your use. It tells how to organize a nature club and gives ideas for keeping it strong. The kit is free. Just write me and ask for it at Box 2299, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103.

Your Entry Blank for the Second Annual Ranger Rick's Nature Club Contest is right in the middle of this magazine. Open the staples carefully to remove it. Then bend them back again to keep your December book in good shape.

Best of luck to all of you! I can't wait to see the results.

RANGER RICK

How Doctor Dolittle Came To Be

by Jean Horton Berg

When I was a child I laughed and cried over the books Hugh Lofting wrote about Doctor Dolittle of Puddleby-on-the-Marsh, England.

I went to New York not long ago to talk to his son, Christopher Lofting, to find out how the books came to be written. I was excited as I stood at the door of his apartment. As Mr. Lofting opened the door, four little kittens scrambled ahead of him. They mewed and twitched

their noses and waved their tails. Doctor Dolittle would have known what they were saying. But I couldn't understand a single word.

But Christopher Lofting talks people-talk. It's easy to understand him.

He told me that his father was a captain in the Irish Guards during the First World War. He was worried because the animals used by the Army—the horses, dogs and pigeons—had little help. If soldiers were hurt or got sick, they had quick attention, but the animals were often allowed to suffer and die. He felt so sad about this that he made up a character, a doctor who could help suffering animals all over the world. This character was, of course, Doctor Dolittle.

Soon he was making up stories about the doctor and putting them into letters to his little son (Christopher's older brother) and daughter back home. He even sent pictures. Since soldiers don't carry drawing materials with them, he drew with burnt matches or whatever else he could use to make marks. His children loved the stories. So did his wife. She took good care of them and when the war was over she got him to show them to a book publisher.

The publisher was glad to make them into books. The second volume, "The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle," earned the Newbery Medal for the most distinguished children's book of the year.

Christopher Lofting told me he is happy because the movie that can be seen now has what he called "the Dolittle spirit." He acted as a consultant during the making of the

Please turn the page

DRAWINGS FROM THE DOCTOR DOLITTLE BOOKS BY PERMISSION OF CHRISTOPHER LOFTING. THE ORIGINAL DOCTOR DOLITTLE BOOKS BY HUGH LOFTING ARE PUBLISHED BY J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY.

A scene from the movie with Rex Harrison as Doctor Dolittle.

movie and he said that getting all the jungle animals, training them, and caring for them took an enormous amount of money and patience. It was easy enough for the author to have one of his make-believe characters ride a wild animal. But no one has ever before ridden a rhinoceros or a giraffe in a movie.

In one scene, more than a hundred jungle and domestic animals, plus a few snakes, are gathered in Doctor Dolittle's study. It took about a year of patient work to train them to be together peacefully.

Christopher Lofting explained to me that there are restrictions on the kinds of animals you can keep as pets. So the jungle animals had to be given to a zoo, which then loaned them to the studio to make the movie.

Christopher Lofting was born long after his brother and sister for whom the original story-letters were written. He was quite a young boy in 1947 when his father died. Now he's a grown man with a little boy of his own. But he still enjoys the Doctor Dolittle stories, and he likes remembering when his father read them to him.

"He read all of them to me," he said, "and many times. He read them complete with action and expression. In fact, sometimes he got carried away and read the parts of the characters so realistically and so loudly that my mother would come dashing into the room to see what on earth was going on in there."

If you have already adventured into the Doctor Dolittle books, or if your first meeting with him is on the movie screen and then you read the books, I know you will agree with one of the Lofting characters—Bumpo Kabooboo, Crown Prince of Jolliginki —who said, "I am sublimely ecstasied that I did not miss you." *The End*

WHO-O-O KNOWS

by Wise Old Owl

In the July issue of Ranger Rick, Susan Raudebush of California asked Rangers to name the strange bird that she often sees around her house. Many letters have come in answer to this and almost all said it must be a red-tailed hawk.

Why aren't any two snowflakes the same?

—Dale Becker, New Jersey

Floating high in the air are bits of dust from the earth and salt grains from the sea. When they fall through clouds, water vapor collects on them and freezes into ice crystals which keep growing. Since no two crystals travel quite the same path, no two ever grow into quite the same shape. All, however, have six points or sides.

Do polar bears have white fur all year long?

—Donna Cohen, Age 7, Pennsylvania

Yes. Some of the North Pole animals, like the polar bear and the arctic hare, always have white coats. Others, like the snowshoe rabbit and the arctic fox, are white only during the winter months. There is a story of another arctic animal, the caribou, on Page 7.

Now it's time for YOU to answer some Rangers' questions. If you know the answers, write to me, Wise Old Owl, c/o Ranger Rick, P.O. Box 2299, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103. Be sure to give your name, age and address. Here they are:

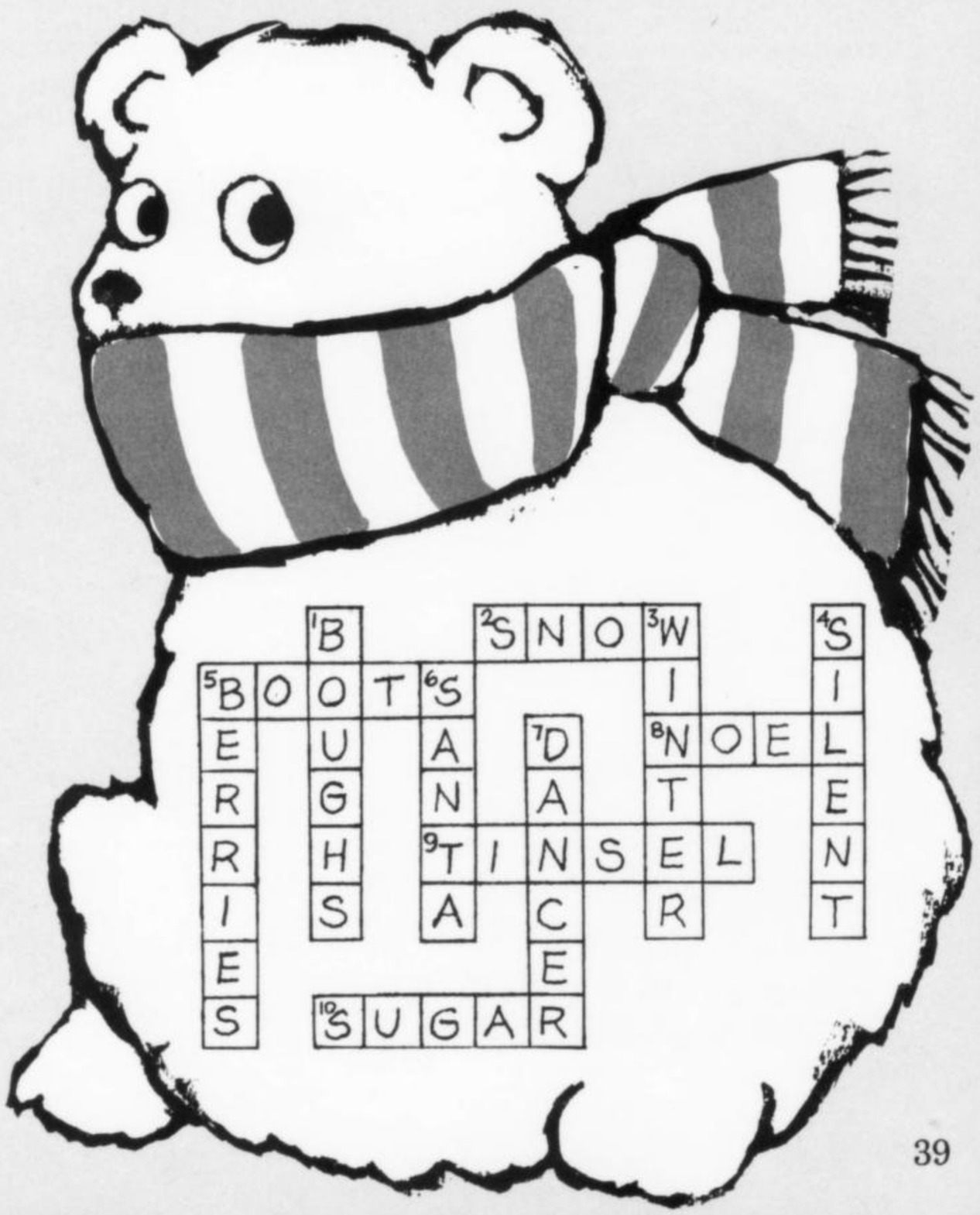
Is the luna moth found in the Chicago area?

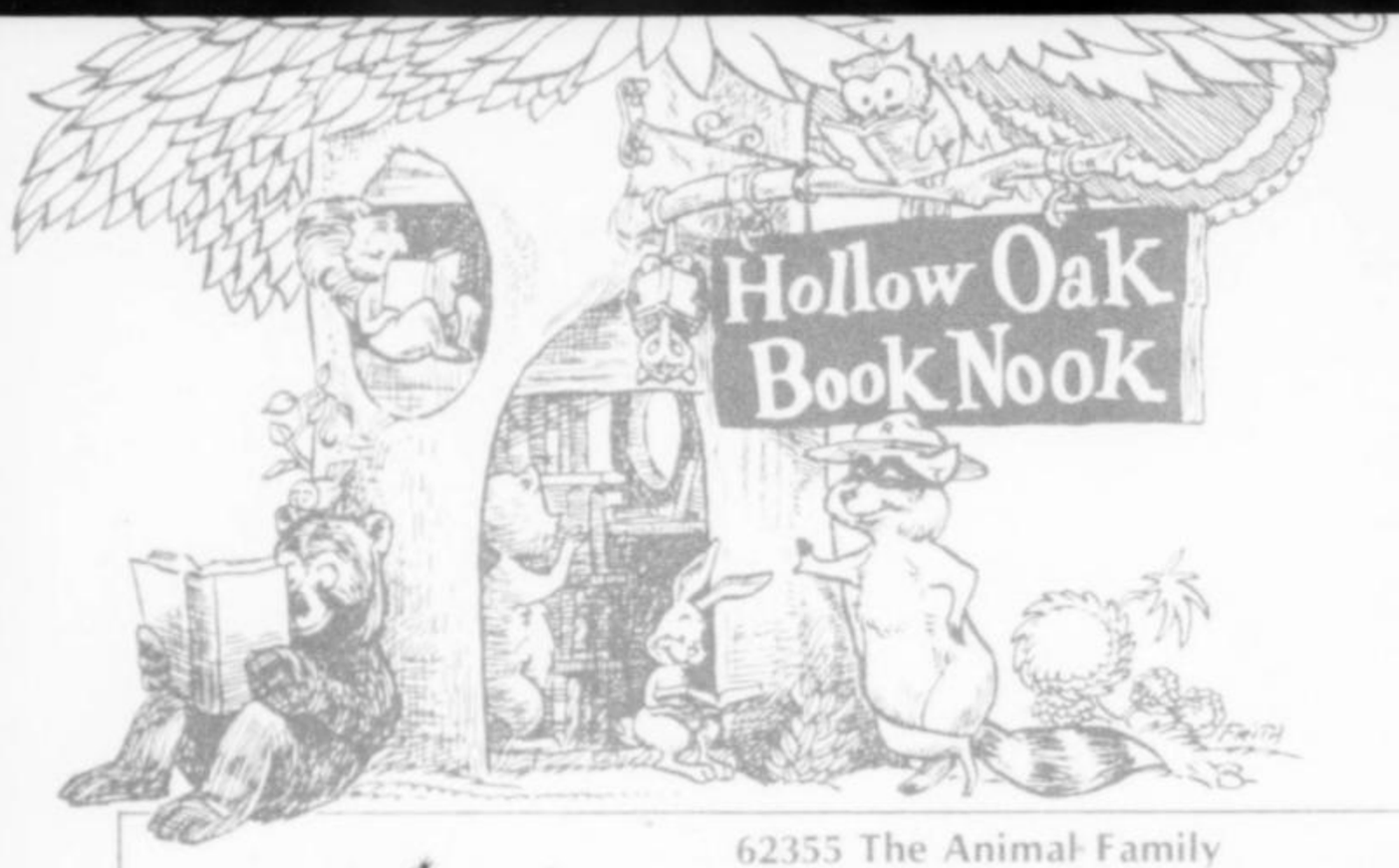
—Kathy Schultz, Illinois

I have a bird feeder in my back yard and every day I feed the birds faithfully but the starlings barely touch it. How can I get them to feed more often with the other birds?

—Richard Kennel, Age 10, New York

Answers to crossword puzzle on Page 35





Hi Rangers!

The woods are all white with snow now, there are sleigh rides, and snowmen, and tall evergreens. What a wonderful time of year! The whole forest is just bubbling with excitement because Christmas is so near. Charlie Chipmunk and Zelda Possum and just about everyone is visiting the Book Nook to get wonderful books as gifts for all their friends. I'll be telling you about some of our favorites in just a minute. A very merry Christmas to all of you!

RANGER RICK

62355 The Animal Family

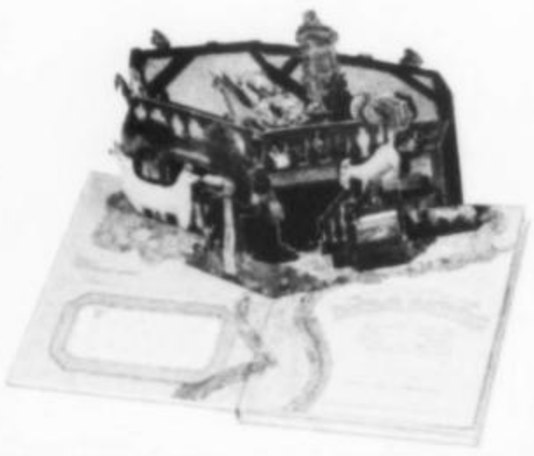
If you like wild animals and desert islands, if you want a second family besides your own, this is the book for you—*The Animal Family,* by Randall Jarrell, one of America's greatest authors. Once a man and a woman and a boy were wrecked on an uninhabited coast. The boy's mother and father grew old, and at last the boy, a man now, was left alone. There in the wilderness he saw and did many wonderful things, but he had no one to show what he had seen or tell what he had done—he was alone.

This is the story of how, one by one, the man found himself a family. Almost nowhere in fiction is there a stranger, dearer, or funnier family than *The Animal Family* in the wilderness beside the sea.

Their wonderful story with drawings by the well-known illustrator Maurice Sendak makes a thoroughly enchanting experience for the entire family.

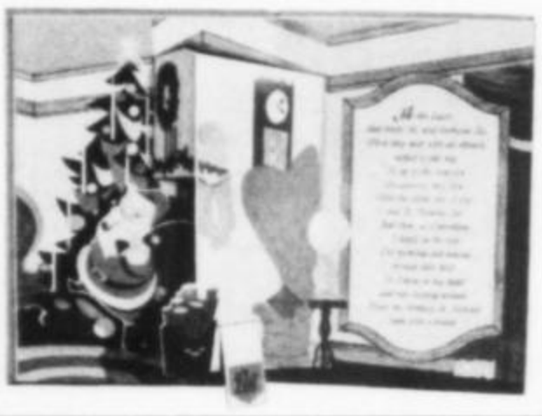
62131 The Swift Deer

If you enjoyed the article "Caribou—the North American Reindeer," you'll want to read about the rest of the deer family in *The Swift Deer* by Robert McClung. Here are the deer of North America, from the tiny key deer of Florida to the giant moose of Alaska. You'll learn how deer live, defend themselves, find mates, and raise their young. There are beautiful photographs of these handsome animals, too—a newborn Chinese water deer fawn, a herd of caribou, fighting bucks—just to name a few. And you'll be able to read this fascinating story of deer all by yourself.



62346 The Pop-Up Dr. Dolittle Book

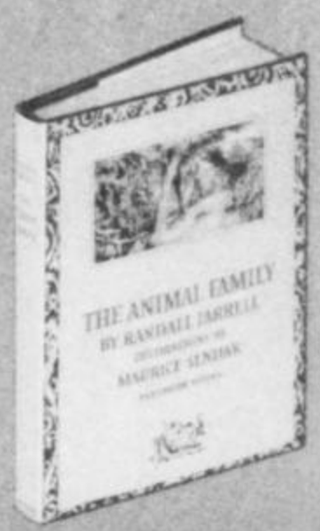
Now that you have discovered the wonderful world of Dr. Dolittle and his animal friends in this issue, I'm sure you'd love to meet these delightful characters again. The next best thing to actually having your own home copy of the fabulous film "Dr. Dolittle," is owning *The Pop-Up Dr. Dolittle Book.* As you turn the pages of this book, just pull the tabs and you'll actually see a whale moving an island, the pushmi-pullyu, and the giant pink snail—all in full-color 3-D pictures that move right before your eyes. And you'll read about Chee Chee the chimpanzee and Dr. Dolittle's pet parrot Polynesia who taught Dr. Dolittle to talk to animals in their own language. A wonderful adventure in reading!



62337 Pop-Up Night Before Christmas

Every Christmas all the young animals gather at the Hollow Oak for a reading of the most delightful Christmas poem of all time, "A Visit from St. Nicholas." This year it's going to be better than ever because we've got a copy of the *Pop-Up Night Before Christmas,* which brings this enchanting, fun-filled poem to life with beautiful 3-dimensional action pop-ups you can work all by yourself. You'll actually see Papa tear open the shutters and throw up the sash, see the reindeer dash away through the sky, see Santa rise up the chimney, and much, much more. Here's a book you shouldn't miss.

Hollow Oak Book Nook SELECTIONS FOR DECEMBER

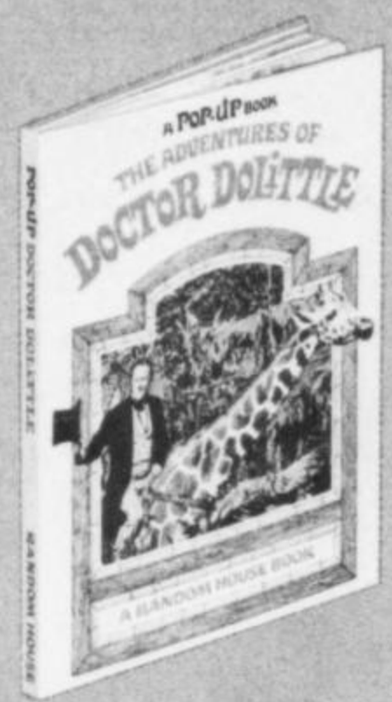


62355 The Animal Family
by Randall Jarrell.

Illustrated by
Maurice Sendak.
For children ages 8 and up.
(Pub. Ed. $3.50) **$2.75**

62131 The Swift Deer
by Robert McClung.

Illustrated with map and photographs. A "Gateway" book for children 7 and up to read all by themselves.
(Pub. Ed. $1.95) **$1.60**



62346 The Pop-Up Dr. Dolittle Book
by Hugh Lofting.

A "Pop-Up Giant" book for ages 4 and up.
(Pub. Ed. $2.95) **$2.35**

62337 Pop-Up Night Before Christmas.

A 3-dimensional "Pop-Up" book for ages 4 and up.
(Pub. Ed. $1.95) **$1.60**

TO ORDER YOUR BOOKS USE ORDER FORM ON REVERSE SIDE OF THIS PAGE. OVER 20% SAVINGS!

IMPORTANT! The publisher's original price is in parentheses, member's price is in bold face numerals. Example: (Pub. Ed. $5.95) **$4.75**

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We must have this number to process your order.

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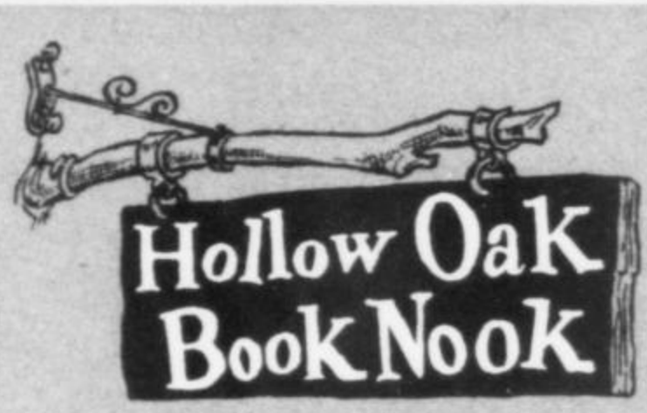
NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION
1412 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D. C. 20036

CUT HERE — SEND COMPLETE ORDER FORM — CUT HERE



HERE'S HOW TO ORDER YOUR BOOKS

- In the QUANTITY column: Enter how many of each book you want.
- In the BOOK NUMBERS column: Before the title of each book, there is a number. This number is what we need to tell us what book you want. Copy it carefully and print it clearly. Otherwise, you may get a different book.
- In the MEMBER'S PRICE column: Take the lowest price shown for that book. Multiply it by the number of books of that title you want. Enter that figure in the member's price column.
- Add up the prices and ask your mother or father for a check or money order.

Fill in clearly your name and address.

HOLLOW OAK BOOK NOOK
% RANGER RICK'S NATURE CLUB
1412 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20036

santa's forest friends

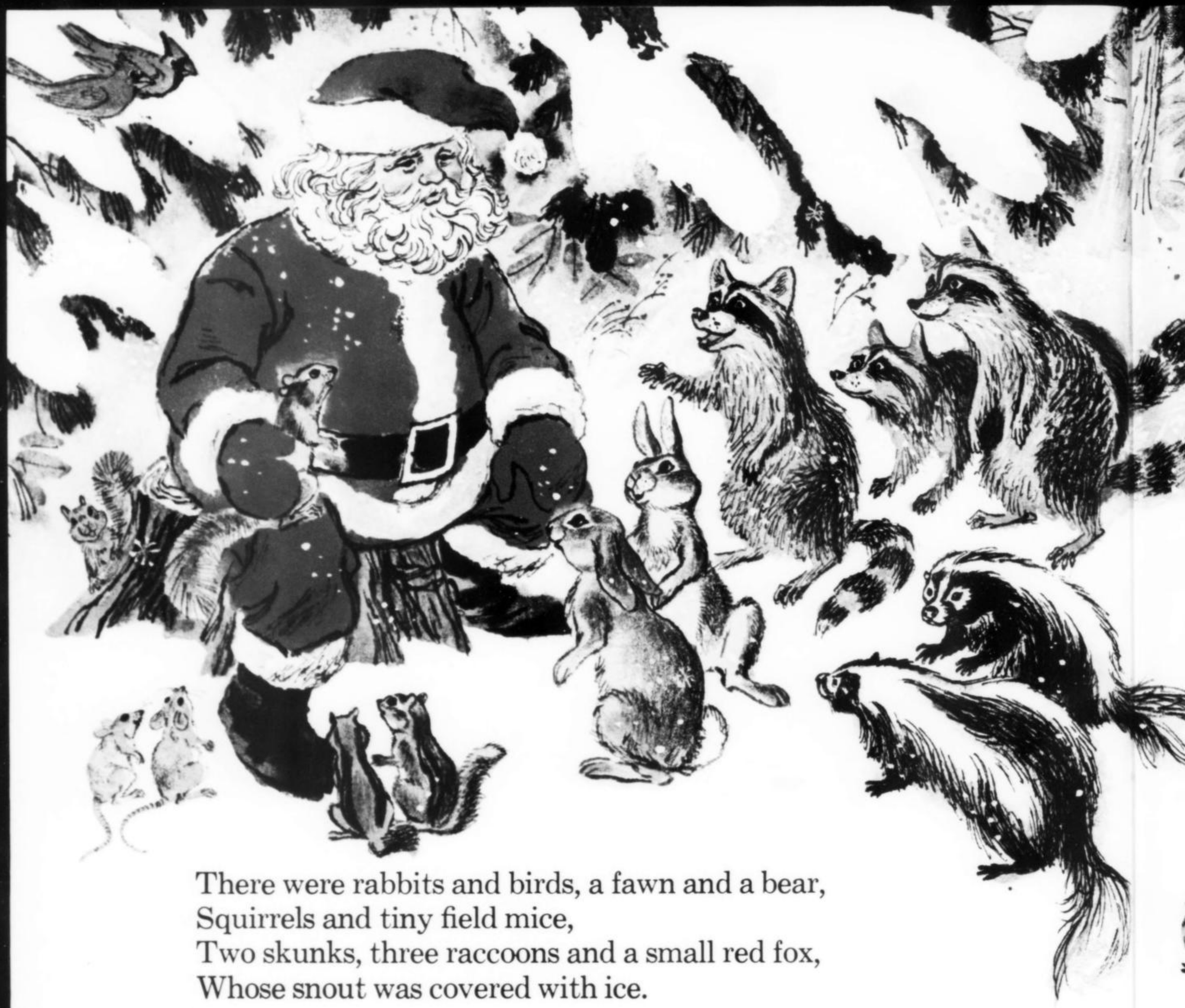
A Christmas Fantasy
by June McLean

A blizzard made old St. Nick set down
In a forest along the way.
Best, he thought, to wait out the storm
And start again the next day.

His reindeer bedded down under sheltering pines,
And Santa sat on a stump to nap.
Then two tiny creatures with bushy tails
Crept close—one jumped on his lap.

Santa opened his eyes and looked about.
Soon the whole forest seemed alive.
Small wild things came from behind tree and stump.
He smiled as he saw them arrive.

Please turn the page



There were rabbits and birds, a fawn and a bear,
Squirrels and tiny field mice,
Two skunks, three raccoons and a small red fox,
Whose snout was covered with ice.

"Ho, ho, Merry Christmas, my friends," said St. Nick.
"Have you come to give me your list?
Please gather around me so I can hear all,
To be sure that no one is missed."

Some little wild creatures climbed up on his knee,
The bigger ones stood close about.
Then all were still as the small fox spoke,
After shaking the ice off his snout.

"We don't have a long list, Santa," he said.
"If you look about, you will see
The forest provides us with most all our needs,
Food and shelter plus a Christmas tree.

"But there's one gift we ask of you, Santa,
Something you bring every year.
It makes people thoughtful, kind and good,
It is called *Christmas Spirit and Cheer*.

"We ask you to bring double measures of this,
To last people all the year through;
So they're not only thoughtful and kind to each other,
But to all little animals too."

Drawings by Beth and Joseph Krush

HOPSY

RED

by Fred Johnson

You have probably seen (and heard) men digging up the streets or breaking concrete with a noisy tool called an air hammer. There is a bird that must think he is an air hammer too. He is the red-headed woodpecker.

About 9 to 10 inches long, he is easily recognized by his all-red head and the little red bib under his chin. He has a black back, white wing patches and white chest. His bill is very strong and is shaped like a chisel. With it he drills holes in tree trunks, limbs, logs, posts, telephone poles and even sides of houses. He pecks so fast and hard that his head becomes a red blur. Even the hardest wood does not stop him. You might think that this would give him a headache, but it doesn't seem to bother him a bit. It's a good thing, for I have never heard of an aspirin for birds. He does this drilling to get at grubs, beetles, larvae and insects that are often under bark. He can drill a hole big enough for a nest, if he can't find a ready-made hole.

Woodpeckers are often seen tapping away on rainspouts, tin roofs, glass insulators and even cars. There are no grubs to be found there, so it seems likely that they are just enjoying the racket they make. (Have you ever rattled a stick along a wooden fence just for the fun of it?)

Noisy Red does not sing but makes several kinds of harsh squawks and screeches. When there are many Noisy Reds in an area, they sometimes gather for what seems to be a meeting to talk about woodpecker problems. As each one arrives, the others keep up a great squawking and chattering until he has sort of "shaken wings" all around and asked about everyone else's family.

Noisy Red likes to poke holes in fruit and is very fond of corn on the cob. He helps himself while it is still on the plant. Farmers do not like this at all. He also tucks away nuts as squirrels do. Sometimes he catches insects in the air while doing fancy acrobatics.

The red-headed woodpecker is found in the East from the Gulf of Mexico to southern Canada. Red sometimes migrates, but more often he stays around all winter and lives on berries, seeds and nuts he has tucked away or what he can steal from the squirrels. He is a bright spot on a tree trunk in snowtime. If you have one around all winter, be sure to put out a big piece of suet for him and his cousin the downy woodpecker (and the other birds too). They will like it. *The End*

Photo by John H. Gerard

Drawing by Donna Miller

Annual Index

JANUARY-
DECEMBER 1967

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Shell Mobile (Aug. 14)
Vegetable Animals (Apr. 36)

NATURE HOBBIES

Beachcombing Collections (July 10-11)
Bird Banding (Mar. 39; Oct. 23-26, 36)
Birds' Diner (Jan. 23-25)
Bluebird Trail (Mar. 38)
Brush Pile Hide-Out (Oct. 4-5)
Camera (Nov. 19-22)
Fishing (July 32)
Goldenrod Jungle (Aug. 30-32)
Haiku, Writing of (Feb. 35)
Leaves, Collecting (Aug. 41-43)
Nature Detective (July 41-43)
Nature Hobbies (Aug. 36)
Snow Experiments (Feb. 38-39)
Tracking (Jan. 10-11; May 37)
Twig Collection (Jan. 33)

PUZZLES, QUIZZES

Animal Quizzes (Jan. 19, 26-28, 37; Feb. 14, 33; Mar. 39; Apr. 14; May 39; July 37; Aug. 9, 11-12, 15)
Crosswords and Acrostics (Feb. 33; May 33; Aug. 15; Oct. 13; Dec. 34)
Dot Puzzles (Jan. 9; Mar. 34; Apr. 15; May 16; Oct. 12; Dec. 34)
Mazes (Jan. 15; Feb. 15)
Tree Rebus (Apr. 13)

RIDDLES, JOKES

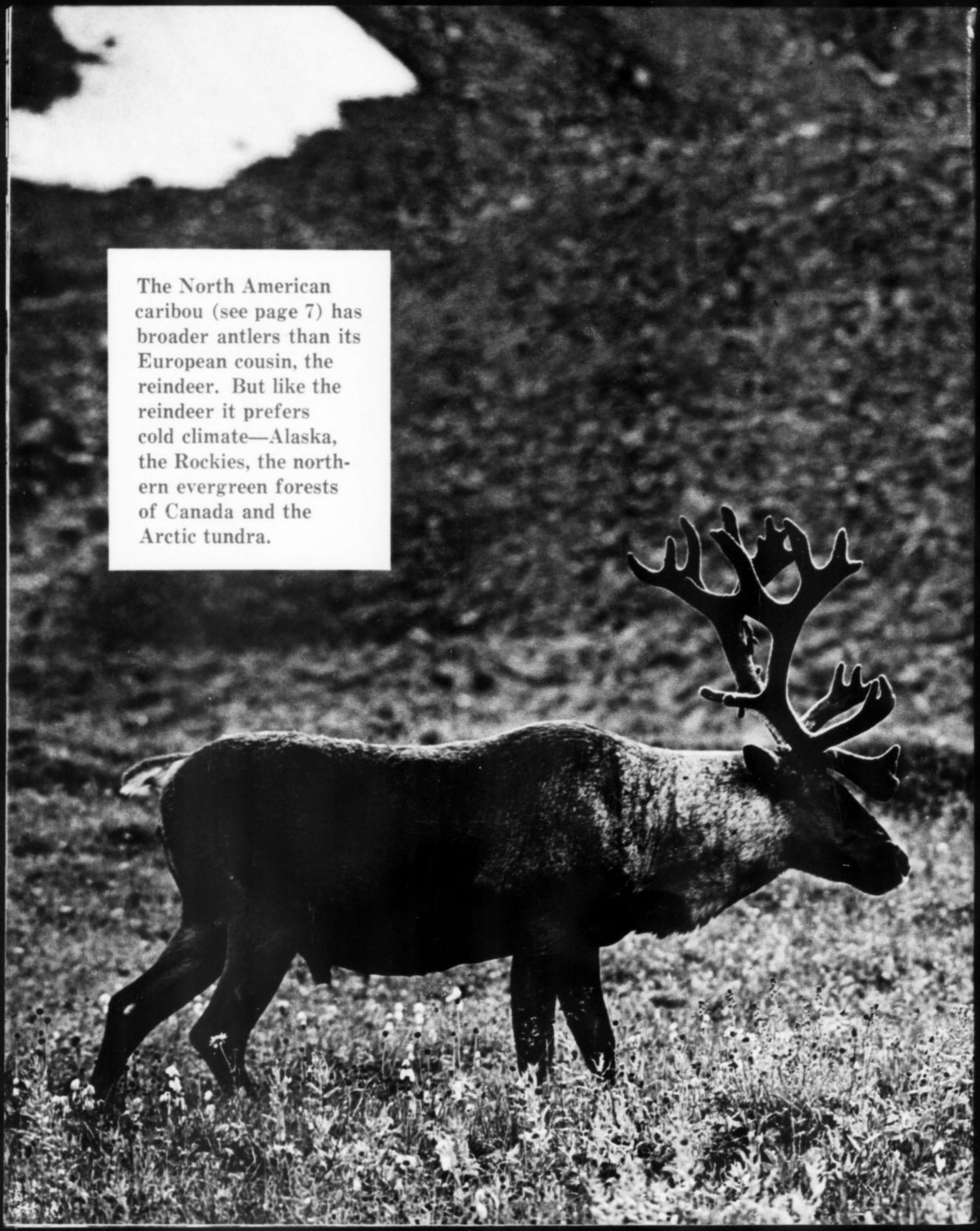
(See Ollie Otter each issue)

Poems

Dragonfly Express (Aug. 25)
Falling Leaves (Oct. 2)
First Spring Flowers (Mar. 47)
Four Baby Owls (Apr. 36)
Haiku (Feb. 35; July 36; Nov. 11)
Hi, Little Butterfly (Jan. 47)
I'm Small (July 2)
Invitation (Oct. 14)
Letter to a Grasshopper (May 47)
Little Raccoon (Feb. 47)
Pumpkin (Oct. 14)
Rabbit Ears (July 36)

Rain (May 36)
Ride With the Wind (Mar. 41)
Santa's Forest Friends (Dec. 41-43)
Sugar-Plum Tree (Dec. 2)
Who Do You Spoze? (Oct. 14)
World by the Sea (July 47)

Drawings by Margaret Estey



The North American caribou (see page 7) has broader antlers than its European cousin, the reindeer. But like the reindeer it prefers cold climate—Alaska, the Rockies, the northern evergreen forests of Canada and the Arctic tundra.